

American Vanguard

EDITED BY DON^{ASIA} M^{WOLFE} WOLFE

APPLEBAUM * BABIKOFF * BONDARENKO * BOORSTEIN
BOXER * BRODNEY * BURRESS * CARO * CAROUSSO
CARTER * DANCHIK * DARDIS * DE LIMA * DUNN
FINE * FRIMET * GAINFORT * GOLDMAN * HARRIS
HELD * HENRY * HOROWITZ * KALISMAN * KARANT
KAUFMAN * LEVIN * MALONEY * MARTIN * NIX
OAKES * O'NEILL * POPOFSKY * POWERS * SEGAL
SPIRO * STYRON * WEINER * WEINSTEIN * WOLFE

A Publication of the New School for Social Research

CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS

ITHACA AND NEW YORK, 1948

Copyright 1948 by Don M. Wolfe

The selection from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is from *Collected Poems of T. S. Eliot*, copyright 1936 by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc. "Down by the Old Mill Stream" copyright 1910 and 1938 Forster Music Publisher, Inc., copyright owners and publishers.

First published, May 1948

Second printing, October 1948

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA BY THE
VAIL-BALLOU PRESS, INC., BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

Preface

THIS is a book of stories, sketches, and excerpts from novels by young American authors on the verge of professional recognition. Their average age is twenty-eight. Though now engaged in many occupations and professions, they are ambitious to be numbered among the future makers of American literature. The purpose of this book is to give them the initial hearing that they deserve from thoughtful critics who distinguish between the taste of the average reader and the creative compulsives of young authors who have not studied the markets. As did their predecessors, Anderson and Dreiser and Cather, these young authors have sat in discussion groups with choice spirits among their peers; though not students in the ordinary sense, most of them have attended professional writing classes at the New School, where they find not only intellectual freedom and variety, but also a maturity of creative endeavor unique in the American scene.

The unknown names of these authors are not only a great handicap to them, but also a formidable obstacle to the discernment of the average critic. The name of Dorothy Parker signed to "Week-End," or that of Fitzgerald signed to "The Wake," would overcome a hurdle in critical appreciation that anonymous merit cannot hope to surmount. It is only the exceptional critic who can project himself beyond the barrier of an unknown name, trusting alone to the classic criteria of structure and style. By such criteria, not by the accident of unpublished names, the work of this book will fade or endure and its authors lose or find ultimate recognition in American literature.

The editor wishes to express his appreciation to his colleagues at the New School for their encouragement of the present authors: Dr. Louis Joughin, Dr. Hiram Haydn, Dr. William Troy, Mr. Gorham Munson, and Dr. Charles Glicksberg. Of these the editor

PREFACE

is especially indebted to Dr. Charles Glicksberg, without whose generous aid and critical insight this volume would not have been possible. Miss Rebecca Boorstein and Miss Ruth Popofsky have rendered valuable assistance in critical evaluation of manuscripts. We are also indebted to Dean Clara Mayer of the New School for Social Research.

D.M.W.

New York

April 10, 1948

Contents

Preface	v
Introduction	<i>Don M. Wolfe</i> ix

I. Profiles of Youth

Little Mule	<i>John Burress</i> 3
Jeannie	<i>Madelyn Harris</i> 13
Bathroom Dilemma	<i>Rebecca Boorstein</i> 21
Privilege	<i>Phyllis Gainfort</i> 27
The White Sweater	<i>Theresa Oakes</i> 32
The Scarf	<i>Thomas A. Dardis</i> 40
The Man of the Family	<i>Jack Boxer</i> 46
A Rose for Maman	<i>Milton Weinstein</i> 51
The Wake	<i>Kenneth Henry</i> 55

II. Love of a Kind

Spring Holiday	<i>Harry Nix</i> 71
The Mermaids Singing	<i>Harold Applebaum</i> 80
Margie Stone	<i>Lili Danchik</i> 93
Four Fridays	<i>Matthew Held</i> 97
Match the Pieces	<i>Leon Horowitz</i> 101
The Substance in the Depth	<i>Jack Segal</i> 110
Kalman Thought of Tomorrow	<i>Frank Spiro</i> 113
Happy Sunday	<i>Philip Karant</i> 121
Week-End	<i>Rebecca Boorstein</i> 128

III. Streets and Shadows

The Unborn	<i>Thomas K. Martin</i> 139
Subway to Brooklyn	<i>John J. Maloney</i> 143
Peace	<i>Paul A. Fine</i> 150

CONTENTS

The Last Flight	<i>Kay Brodney</i> 154
It Wouldn't Be Purple	<i>Alan W. Goldman</i> 163
The Shape of the World	<i>Marat Kaufman</i> 171
How Far Can You Go?	<i>Ruth Popofsky</i> 176
In the Early Hours	<i>Harry Nix</i> 180
The Laughing Santa	<i>Vladimir Babikoff</i> 185
Notes from Washington Square	<i>Hillel Frimet</i> 188

IV. They Say the War Is Over

The Fall of a Southern Ego	<i>Herbert Kalisman</i> 197
Thumbs Up	<i>John Weiner</i> 204
First Encounter	<i>Thomas K. Martin</i> 209
Curfew	<i>Leon Horowitz</i> 213
The Search	<i>Thomas A. Dardis</i> 220
O'Hara's Creation	<i>Robert Carter</i> 227
A Moment in Trieste	<i>William C. Styron, Jr.</i> 241

V. Bring Back the Dead

I Couldn't Cry	<i>Marshall N. Levin</i> 251
Folded Hands	<i>Angelica Caro</i> 255
Fog	<i>Costa Carousso</i> 260
Dog Down the Deadlights	<i>Hillel Frimet</i> 265

VI. Introspections and Recollections

The Girl's Banana	<i>William Carl Bondarenko</i> 279
The Biggest Horses in the World	<i>Helen Powers</i> 282
Captain's Beach	<i>Sigrid de Lima</i> 286
The Visit	<i>Nena O'Neill</i> 291
Chimera	<i>Charles Michael Dunn</i> 298

Appendix: Creative Documentary

Down the Chain	<i>Paul A. Fine</i> 303
Biographical Notes	<i>Don M. Wolfe</i> 309

Introduction

IN EACH AGE the winds of chance blow creative spirits together into a center of hopes and strivings: Athens its Academy, Elizabethan England its Mermaid Tavern, New England its Concord, Paris its Latin Quarter, New York its Greenwich Village. In Greenwich Village, between the wars, worked Theodore Dreiser, awkward and brooding, patient and gentle with young men, his genius still burdened with the endless birth pains of *An American Tragedy*. Here also labored Thomas Wolfe, in frenzied outpourings of passionate memory, driven by "that bright flame with which a young man writes who has never been published." Around Washington Square, and along Eighth Street, before the fireplaces of the Jumble Shop, the memory of Tom Wolfe is green and fresh: a great hulk of a man, his mien gentle, his eyes hungry for all of life, this face, that face, the indelible image of face or stone or color shaping in his mind even with his darting glance. In Greenwich Village lived the sad Hart Crane, and thousands whose hopes died while they lived on, unable to master the mighty talent of sitting still before a typewriter, five hours, ten hours daily, for a trickle of images, a page or two of scattered thoughts, the heart with black doubt bare and frustrate. But a clear spirit, sure of his destiny, sets many another aflame with hope, the stirrings of genius, limited or vast. No gift of genetic chance, but the vehement clash of aspiring minds, guides the birth of the creative soul, in Greenwich Village, as in Athens or London of long ago.

After World War II, as in the 1920's, restless minds from America's vast reaches have sought New York and Greenwich Village for the testing of their creative hardihood. Such a group of men and women are the authors of this book. From many states they gather, from the farms of Georgia, Missouri, Wisconsin, from the small towns of Colorado, Kansas, Minnesota, Long Island, the nervous streets of Los Angeles and New York, the sedate quiet of New England villages. Though most of them are young, they have dipped deep, as their stories show, in the bitterness and sadness of life. They know the look

INTRODUCTION

of starvation and the smell of death; they have seen the Chinese earth, the coral of Pacific islands, the treacherous valleys of the Aleutians, the steel and brick jungles of Berlin, the flattened horror of Hiroshima; they know the vast dreams of youth and the dispelling of hopes; they know the infinite range of phallic hunger, the torture of monotony, the choking of the heart when life runs low and ideals of justice fade into a mocking laugh.

II

More than any generation of Americans, they are humble and sad, like Styron in his memorable sketch, "A Moment in Trieste." In their hearts, as in the world, there is no peace. After no other war have Americans returned to their homes with a sense of world catastrophe, past and imminent, or with such varied images of irrationality and confusion triumphant over the simple decencies they had thought inevitably would prevail. One cannot imagine a confident Whitman among them, a young Mark Twain, full of boisterous frontier frolic, a Hamlin Garland, with his burden of farm ugliness and heartbreak, or a Sidney Lanier, throat and mind and fingers full of music. They are not sustained by the vistas of an expanding democratic era, as was Whitman, or by visions of a more rational organization of society, as was Edward Bellamy. Nor do they find irony a refuge, as did Sinclair Lewis, or egoism and cruelty, as did Hemingway. Having witnessed infinite and irrational destruction, they have been led to doubt the capacity of world society to reverse the wheels of self-immolation, and even, at times, the capacity of the single man so to impress his image of reason on the minds of his contemporaries as to reduce in them the vast wells of hatred and superstition. In the presence of such darkness, I say, they are humble and sad, holding neither to the sublime faith of an Emerson nor to the escape patterns of Henry James and the expatriates of the 1920's. They face life unflinchingly, examining themselves with wonder and hope, too mature for cynicism, too experienced for shock. In spirit they are more akin to the massive tenderness of Dreiser, the delicate compassion of Willa Cather, or the detachment of Stephen Crane than to the volcanic intensity of Faulkner or Melville.

Within the lively variety of this book, as I have said, I find a tone of grey sadness, a shading of frustration and ugliness and the dwindling

INTRODUCTION

of hope. But neither as a critic of literature or of life do I find this a reason for astonishment or despair. If happiness, as Hardy wrote, is "but an occasional episode in the general drama of pain," this does not mean that man's unhappiness is his fated destiny. It means only that we have not united to remove the pervading causes of unhappiness, such as poverty and war. If Americans are to solve such problems, either personal or social, their first duty is a deep-boring honesty that brooks no barriers, an honesty such as impelled Mark Twain when he wrote *The Gilded Age* and Dos Passos when he wrote *U.S.A.* "I understand that a man is born into the world with his own pair of eyes," wrote Stephen Crane, "and he is not at all responsible for his vision—he is merely responsible for his quality of personal honesty. To keep close to this personal honesty is my supreme ambition." If such honesty has a beauty of its own, then the authors of this book possess it in abundance. No bitterness, no sadness, no brutality in American life will vanish for our looking another way amid the general drama of pain.

To pursue the beauty of rigorous honesty, to open one by one the festering wounds, the dead ends, to trace dilemmas of heartbreak inherent in our culture, all this, I say, is not to despair of the nature of man or his ultimate possession of a glorious earth. It is rather to trace the spiritual poverty of our time to its massive impersonal roots. "Public Enemy No. 1," wrote Heywood Broun long ago, "is not a man. It is a tenement house . . . a farm precariously held, or indeed any spot . . . where misery is salted into the wounds of the desperate." In the Garden of Eden, asserted Lincoln Steffens, ~~the~~ the core of evil was not Eve or Satan or the serpent, but the apple itself. The impersonality of evil, a concept vital to creative maturity, is yet but a fleeting realization in the minds of men. In Dardis' "The Search" an innocent German girl passes through a barracks of sotted American soldiers, finding at last the deflowered and lifeless body of her sister. Beyond this horror lies not the feeble free choice of American soldiers, but rather the mass degradation imposed by military necessity. In "Dog Down the Deadlights" the hero, gentle and compassionate, finds himself an inadequate medic; he cannot close his heart and mind against the butchering of men and the mangling of their spirits. But when he finds himself unhinged, the psychiatrist only asks, "When did you stop wetting the bed?" The more perceptive the writer, the more deeply he is aware of social insanities and their crushing weight on the souls of

INTRODUCTION

men, a process in which even the lust for torture, as in "The Curfew," rides free and triumphant over the example of a mother's kindness and the habits of a decade. Nor can we doubt that the same men who tortured, when they return to a normal life, will become in the main kind fathers and gentle husbands, showing such compassion as their childhoods taught them to bestow.

If this book delineates some of the central conflicts of childhood, love, and war, it cannot be said that it represents a rounded portrait of any single author. It is impossible in two or three stories, even in two or three novels, to communicate the full range of one man's moods, impulses, and dreams. Though no Mark Twain is among them, none of the strange glory of Lincoln's laughter, by which he lightened the burdens of his sad interior, the authors of this book are normally as gay and hopeful as any of their contemporaries. In the whimsy of Bondarenko's "The Girl's Banana," the bubbling irony of "The White Sweater," and the deft strokes of "Bathroom Dilemma," we may see a normal capacity not only for fun and frolic in actual life, but for communicating as well the laughter of the mind. When a mature writer essays a diagnosis of his age and a portrait of himself in a long work of fiction such as *Gulliver's Travels* or *Don Quixote* or *Main Street*, he commands the use of his full resources, the variety of his day's tempo, and the infinite range of laughter and frolic. But when a young writer in the first years of creative struggle sets down his impressions of life in such short forms as the sketch and the story, he does not expect to leave us either a full portrait of himself or a balanced judgment of the life around him. The tone of grey sadness in this book, therefore, is neither a confession of despair nor a symptom of neuroticism, but only an honest dominant response to the somber tragedy of man confused and groping while holding in his hands the keys to a tranquil, hungerless world. Now and then we get the savage genius of a Swift, the priceless gift of a Mark Twain, exploding social superstitions while the belly quakes. But to many a young writer today laughter may be an escape, even a madness. In "Subway to Brooklyn" the hero seeks a philosophy of love amid the dreary ugliness of Manhattan's streets and faces. On the subway a drunken sot of a man accosts him. Is the hero to laugh at him, as do his fellow passengers? Finally the drunken man stumbles through the door and falls headlong on the concrete platform. As the hero berates himself for not rescuing the helpless

INTRODUCTION

drunk, he senses the giggles of his fellow onlookers. Such an incongruity between life's reality and its potential, Dickens or Fielding or Mark Twain would have seasoned with the timeless salt of laughter; but the command of laughter in great fiction denotes the confidence of a mature writer not only in himself, but in the ultimate security of his world. This security the young writer of today, whether in America, England, or Russia, can attain only at the sacrifice of an honest appraisal of the world's ills. "I smile often, but I seldom laugh inside," said Oliver Wendell Holmes. "The world is too sad."

III

Out of the chaos around him and within, the young American writer is striving to give birth to beauty, sustained or brief, "to leave something so written to aftertimes," as Milton said, "as they should not willingly let it die." Even to perceive irrationality, as have Styron, Frimet, Martin, and other authors of this volume, and to cast it into the imperishable printed page, is to etch an harmonious record of an independent man, who is, as Nietzsche says, "a storm pregnant with new lightnings." "There is no joy but in creation," wrote Rolland in *Jean-Christophe*. "All the joys of life are the joys of creation: love, genius, action,—quickened by flames issuing from one and the same fire. . . . To create in the region of the body, or in the region of the mind, is to issue from the prison of the body: it is to ride upon the storm of life. . . . To create is to triumph over death." To create, I would add, is to triumph over death in a double sense: When man creates, when he pierces one of the thousand hearts of life and lays it bare, he raises himself for the moment beyond the power of his black world. In carrying a torch into the dark caverns of life, he has lost his slavery to their walls. But he has done more: When his story is published, the mysterious harmonious sally of his powers may live forever; as long as the atomic bombs leave one copy of his book unscarred, it may work triumphant magic in the minds of other eras.

As the heightening social conflicts of our era sharpen the artist's internal dislocations, he finds creative endeavor a recurring necessity. Only in the act of creation can the artist take the fragmentary and the irrational and give them the integration of a central meaning or the evocation of pity and terror. "For life spills over us in chaotic overflow

INTRODUCTION

each day," writes Phyllis Gainfort, "and the artist feels the need of arresting it, of damming it up in pools or riverbeds, of giving it pattern, and thence, meaning." Not romantic idylls, as Maloney asserts, but the writing of tragedy is in such an era the writer's preoccupation. "It is said," writes Maloney, "that the artist cannot possibly do his work well while the world totters on the brink of destruction. I do not believe this. . . . The artist can and must function today, even within the shadow of the atomic bomb." In the midst of this splintering confusion the young writer could not write without holding an unswerving faith in human reason, in man's ultimate response to the artist's patterns of beauty and sanity. And in facing the deepest dilemmas of life, curiously enough, the young writer, as in Martin's "The Unborn," escapes the total impact of the confusion around him and restores to his soul a fresh serenity. "Every other purposeful activity," writes Miss Boorstein, "seems to me to be concerned with mere preparation for living. Only the creative arts give me the satisfaction of feeling that I am dealing directly with life itself." Only in creative writing, furthermore, does self-examination achieve supreme detachment and comprehension, requiring, as Clara Mayer has said of the present authors, a "penetration to unplumbed depths where normally we keep our deepest convictions hidden even from ourselves."

In Carter's story, "O'Hara's Creation," the painter-hero night after night seeks the solace of his Chinese mistress and the oblivion of drink to escape the monotony of Army drudgery. At last one day, through the benevolent concern of his lieutenant, O'Hara engages for the first time in years in a creative task, the painting of murals for the new recreation hall. As his creation evolves, O'Hara finds himself working in eager concentration. No longer does a new day bring only a prolongation of despair. Finally, when the murals near completion, and the soldiers hear that the area is soon to be evacuated to the Chinese, O'Hara works more feverishly than ever, coveting now the precious daylight that in past months he had so dreaded. Finding at last that his murals will live but for a few days more in the eyes of his comrades, and facing return to the monotony of a world in which every creative act ends only in ugly abortion, O'Hara turns again in despair to the arms of a drunken forgetfulness. In this story Carter illumines one of the central dilemmas of our chaotic world: the embittered misdirection of creative power. Every soul, as well as every body, is pregnant with

INTRODUCTION

beautiful forms. "There certainly are men," wrote Plato, "who are more creative in their souls than in their bodies." From the monotonous patterns of an industrial civilization millions of men were thrust into the military prison houses of spiritual coercion from which there was no escape. Returning now to civilian life, many of them round pegs in square holes, sensitive Americans like the authors of this book seek to trace the flow of creative energy into its innumerable channels. Only by a fearless examination of black and ugly channels can we as citizens be thoughtful of each other and the multitudes whose creative energy is never transmuted into a painting, a poem, a rose garden, a mellow friendship, a design for a graceful bridge. The reaches of the common man into uncommon creativeness, as in the lives of Lincoln, Whitman, London, Sandburg, Richard Wright, Marian Anderson, are as yet singular phenomena in American life. In a truly democratic era we shall mine the creative gold of the common man more zealously than we now seek the resources of atomic energy.

IV

Ringed round by change and uncertainty, the young author often returns to the enduring memories of his childhood for the rich, memorable image, the unique flavor of life and death distilled in those early years. The more deftly and completely he traces the delicate etchings, the harrowing moments, of his childhood, the voice tones and face lines, colors and sounds, the smell of wood smoke or cornbread, the wet brown of furling earth behind the plow, the more surely does he bring his first hero, himself, to the threshold of reality. Not in shaped and bitten man, but in his childhood life, do we seek the seeds of his unique and lonely soul. Thus in *Of Human Bondage* did Maugham leave an indelible image of himself, and Dickens release in *Great Expectations* the boyhood torments that fathered his frustrations. In his novel, *Little Mule*, John Burrell sketches the impact of his father's death on the mind of a little boy. Now many boys have experienced death, with many of the same thoughts; the problem is to particularize so thoroughly the mind of Little Mule, and the world impinging on his senses, that no reader could mistake another boy for him. Similarly Nena O'Neill's heroine in "The Visit" could be mistaken for no other, nor the world of the hero in Marshall

INTRODUCTION

Levin's sketch, "I Couldn't Cry." Many a girl knows the smell of horses, but who would have found it mingled with the golden aura of a childhood utopia, as does Helen Powers in "The Biggest Horses in the World"? Nor could the disparity of bathroom walls and fixtures have had the same texture of impact on another girlish mind as on the heroine of "Bathroom Dilemma." In the infinite range of such childhood impressions, in the remembrance of even one child's most intimate thoughts and feelings, the creative writer has at hand a priceless vein of gold ready for digging.

V

In writing of love and the infinite gradations of sexual need, the young writer opens one of the deepest hidden springs of his resources, the waters now acrid and foul, now sweet and clear, filled with a golden light of childhood dreams. Collectively these resources are so vast and profound as to be still recorded only in splinters and fragments; not in half a century, asserts Arthur Koestler, can we expect the novelist to parallel in fiction the researches of Sigmund Freud. No field of experience must the artist approach with more detachment, or fewer moral predilections, if he wishes to lend it illumination significant for posterity. As we might expect from Americans who entered adolescence with so much hope, despite the depression, the dominant note in the present stories is not fulfillment, but frustration. In Kaufman's sketch, "The Shape of the World," the hero seeks fulfillment and security, however fleeting, in coition with a nameless girl. But in the midst of this reality (intensified a thousandfold by the thought of tomorrow's bomb), he is overwhelmed by the sadness of his father's life, a life pervaded by love and good will, but broken by waste and despair. In Horowitz' "Match the Pieces" the hero's military life in Europe, where the casual clash of bodies was accepted amid the general devastation as natural and inevitable, has unfitted him for polite evenings with American girls. It is not easy for the veteran to slough off a world in which death was an imminent reality, and each day's military necessities dissolved anew all ethical connections and heightened the need for even the passing warmth of human arms. Does not the soldier's life dam up irretrievably the creative concomitants of sexual hunger? This is a field yet to be plowed and harrowed by a new gen-

INTRODUCTION

eration of writers. Indeed, in no field of experience lie so many unanswered questions as in that of sexual behavior. Here the timeless pertinence of *The Scarlet Letter* is instructive, and that memorable reply of Chrysis in *The Woman of Andros* (to the young man questioning her hetaira way of life), "Of all the forms of genius, goodness has the longest awkward age."

Too rarely of late years amid the batterings of depression and war has the young writer experienced the transfiguring power of love. All too often, even a small portion of it has been denied him. He sees the unsatisfied woman, like the Margie Stone of Lili Danchik's sketch, enduring both biological and psychic frustration. Such heart-break in marriage the young writer of today faces with a singular honesty, darkening in his mind the possibility of happiness in an institution so beset by the confusions and contradictions of our era. Often, as in "Spring Holiday," the impulse to love is at war with ultimate self-realization. Or as in "Kalman Thought of Tomorrow," love strains hopelessly at the ties of a mother's world. Outside of marriage many a woman, like the heroine of "Week-End," capitulates reluctantly to the persuasions of her body, while the psyche, unattached and restless, writhes in despair. More insistently than his counterpart of preceding generations, the young writer is aware of the unique loneliness each man and woman bears, a loneliness that the most selfless devotion is often helpless to dispel. Much as one may love another, he can never fasten wholly upon the inner core of another's life, meet the thousand needs that crisscross there in a day of leaping thoughts. Beyond the impenetrable uniqueness of man's life lies a still more ironical fact: however deeply two people love, they love unequally. If they were to turn their backs on each other and never meet again, the sufferings of each would waver, but not with the same snowfall or the same budding of apple trees. As life nibbles at the heartbreak of death, so does it nibble at the heartbreak of love. Rarely in literature, more rarely in life, do we meet a love triumphant over the claims of renewed life, as in Desdemona and Marty South of Hardy's *Woodlanders*. A love that "bears it out to the edge of doom"—does this require a simple heart, a heart untouched by the tug of books and music and the vistas of new lands? In the complexities of our society, in the thousand forces that rend and bind us, perhaps we are fashioning fewer simple souls with a readiness for Desdemona's

INTRODUCTION

last words, "Nobody; I myself. Farewell! Commend me to my kind lord." To say this is not to despair of love's magic or the human earth in which it blooms, but rather to understand the poisons in our cultural soil that make their mark upon all life, love and marriage not excepted.

VI

From the dominant themes of childhood and love the young writer often turns by one path or another into the crucial social dilemmas of his day. As Arthur Koestler points out in "The Novelist's Temptations," the artist is like a man sitting at a window as he writes, aware or not of the world outside. If the writer chooses, he can, like Henry James, immerse himself in the inner life of his characters, closing the curtains to the outside world, insulating his spirit against the madding crowd, the blackened slum, the bones of the gas chamber, the black man dangling from the rope, the eyes of children crying for bread, the words of Vanzetti before his execution. Still another choice of the novelist is that of Thackeray and Hawthorne: he may observe with a telescope one segment of the world outside, mastering the intricacies and subtleties of one great theme or one segment of the social scene. Then, too, the novelist may become so absorbed in the outside world that he can no longer remain aloof. He injects himself vehemently into that world, as did Sinclair in *The Jungle* and Norris in *The Octopus*, losing somewhat of the detachment of the artist in the documentation of the boiling present. Finally the novelist may, like Tolstoi and Dreiser, preserve artistic equilibrium with the window wide open, his spirit heavy with the labor of slaves, the shadow of the atom bomb, the ragged Greek at the mountain top, the Palestinian astride his tractor; yet with his creative faculties in such profound equilibrium that his people, like Levin, Clyde Griffiths, and Anna Karenina, live and breathe long after the old ills of society have passed away. What novelist has penned a more damning indictment of Czarist Russia than has Tolstoi in *Resurrection*? Yet Tolstoi has bestowed on Katusha and Nekludoff unique and unforgettable characters.

The young writer, then, cannot reach his full stature while shutting the curtains to the world's ills. If his duty is to interpret man, as Maloney asserts, not solve his problems, he must consider that the

INTRODUCTION

greatest art is also the most permanent propaganda for the values in which he believes. *The Scarlet Letter* is timeless propaganda for honesty in the definition of marriage: but how is the definition of marriage to be separated in any era from the exigencies of social reform? When a writer bores deep down into the frustrations of a unique man or woman, he cannot help clarifying consciously or unconsciously the social concomitants of personal despair. In Willa Cather's "A Wagner Matinee," for example, we have a portrait of Aunt Georgiana, a woman apparently remote from problems of social salvation. From thirty years of existence on an ugly Nebraska farm, where she has borne six children and labored for over a decade without seeing a musical instrument, Aunt Georgiana returns to Boston, where she attends a Wagner program with her nephew. In her early life in New England, before eloping with Howard Carpenter, Aunt Georgiana had been a pianist and a teacher of music. Slowly the symphony arouses the memory of cherished beauty: "It never really dies, then—the soul which can suffer so excruciatingly and so interminably; it withers to the outward eye only; like that strange moss which can lie on a dusty shelf half a century, and yet, if placed in water, grows green again." At the end of the story Aunt Georgiana breaks into tears and sobs, "I don't want to go, Clark, I don't want to go!" In contrast to this reassertion of the soul's greenness is the ugliness of pioneer life to which Georgiana must now return: "the tall unpainted house with weather-curved boards, naked as a tower; the crook-backed ash ceilings where the dishcloths hung to dry; the gaunt moulting turkeys picking up refuse about the kitchen door."

VII

At first glance, as Willa Cather intended, "A Wagner Matinee" is a portrait of Aunt Georgiana, seduced on one side by the beauty clasped in youth and driven on the other by family ties knotted amid insufferable ugliness. But it is true also that millions of Aunt Georgianas have been "carried out where the myriad graves are, into the gray, nameless burying grounds of the sea, or into some world of death vaster yet, where, from the beginning of the world, hope has lain down with hope and dream with dream and, renouncing, slept." Not Aunt Georgiana alone, but the pervading tragedy, must be the artist's con-

INTRODUCTION

cern. The answer to Aunt Georgiana's riddle is to be sought neither in acquiescing in her suffering nor in the renunciation of her dreams. The prevailing ugliness of frontier homes, the spiritual barrenness of long labor, whether in farm slum or city slum, the nagging torment of survival, that destroyer of dreams and dreamers—these realities will vanish only under the impact of social resolution and co-operative spearheads. In "A Wagner Matinee" Willa Cather has rendered the artist's timeless service of planting a question so deep in human life that you and I, and the generations to come, seek desperately an answer. No great art, then, is without its social meaning, and the greatest art possesses the deepest social meaning; but it is part of the true artist's detachment that he acts, as in *The Scarlet Letter*, as an interpreter of the question for a unique character, rather than as the voice of the answer for us all.

Not only will the artist plant deep questions that require new answers from each generation, but he will probe the deep recesses of the nature of man and leave in his books the crystal insight of his probing. Of Zola's great scheme of fiction Henry James wrote, "His general subject in the last analysis was the nature of man; in dealing with which he took up, obviously, the harp of most numerous strings. His business was to make these strings sound true, and there was none that he did not, so far as his general economy permitted, persistently try." But Zola, like Dreiser and Farrell, could record more deftly the nether reaches of man's nature than the upper. As *L'Assommoir* portrays the degradation of man buffeted by poverty and ignorance, and Henry James the middle stations of man's flight, Thomas Hardy in *Tess* and Michael Henchard delineates the triumph of man's soaring spirit. Of such infinite range is man that great books have emerged from all levels of his behavior. But as Browning wrote in *Pauline*, "a perfect bard was one who shadowed out the stages of all life." Except from the insight of a Shakespeare, a Fielding, a Cervantes, a Hardy, this is a perspective to be hoped for rather than expected. These artists, like Tolstoi and Dostoievsky, have approached the nature of man humbly, without predilections, their eyes on the world beyond the window, sensing the magic of ideas, the impersonal cruelty of encircling whips, objectifying evil not in man, but in the forces beyond him. Such a great artist, like Thomas Hardy, it is futile to describe as a pessimist or a fatalist: He is rather a superb analyst of cause and effect, super-

INTRODUCTION

stitious neither about the inheritance of sadism and cruelty nor the genetic transmission of divinity. "If the way to the Better there be," asserted Hardy, "it exacts a full look at the Worst." To look at the worst in man is not necessarily to pigeonhole his nature at the chimpanzee level. In the supreme artist it is rather to trace beyond man the seeds of his behavior in forces and patterns beyond his choice. The artist senses that the priceless ingredient of human nature is not free will, but plasticity. If man yields to the poisons of sadism and hatred, he yields by the same magic process to the persuasions of a St. Francis, a Thomas More, an Abraham Lincoln.

VIII

One of the first tasks of the young writer is to release from his memory streams of authentic images carrying with them, as in Michael Dunn's "Chimera," the confident language rhythms of an independent spirit. Only in this flow of personality can he achieve the integration of his creative forces, sensory, emotional, and philosophical, as does Dostoevsky in *The House of the Dead*, Melville in *Typee*, Wolfe in *Look Homeward, Angel*. Like these men, the young writer must have confidence that a relentless delineation of his own unique life will bear a unique vitality, resisting what Edith Wharton calls "that common symptom of immaturity, the dread of doing what has been done before." Any childhood fully recorded will call up universal patterns; but the first day of womanhood, for example, the first emission, the first detached impression of a father as a person, the first impact of death, strike no two lives with identical shadows or effects. By recording any experience in the full flow of impassioned memory, enclosing both the relevant and the apparently irrelevant images, the young writer makes his experience unique in proportion as he extracts from it the uttermost differentiation. "You must squeeze out of yourself every sensation," wrote Joseph Conrad, "every thought, every image,—mercilessly, without reserve and without remorse: you must search the darkest corners of your heart, the most remote recesses of your brain,—and you must search them for the image, for the glamour, for the right expression." To achieve the free flow of one's creative powers enforces a temporary disregard of classic form and structure. Thomas Wolfe's record of the ride through Virginia in *Of Time and the River* was

INTRODUCTION

as long as a novel in its original form; but this waiving of proportion was a necessary consequence of Wolfe's fierce hunger for exhaustive delineation of life. In this sense the novel provides a more suitable medium for the young writer than the short story. It accommodates itself easily to digressions incidental, even irrelevant, to requirements of form, but crucial to the illumination of the author's unique vitality.

To select materials from the stock of memories is a genuinely creative effort only when the author compels belief in his unique world with sharpened images no one else can muster. "To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced," wrote Tolstoi in *What Is Art?* "then by means of movements, lines, colours, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others experience the same feeling—this is the activity of art." The essence of particularity is this visualization, profuse and massed, as in Wolfe, Lewis, and Dreiser, or selective and sparing, as in Hawthorne, Cather, and Stephen Crane. A torrent of images, throwing structure awry, may uncover unexpectedly an outpost of mind or motive, leaving a more thorough record than any yet set down. For this illumination, rarely in the short story, often in the novel, we gladly digress; and the young author, as in Sinclair Lewis' description of the store windows of Gopher Prairie, may risk profuse imagery with less danger than sparse, especially if through it he releases the flow of his rhythm resources. But even from the mass of images emerges a decisive and unforgettable one that pierces the mind with a life-long memory: like the single stone in Wordsworth's "Michael," the moulting turkeys and cattle tracks in "A Wagner Matinee," the dead goldfinch in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the red bandanna handkerchief in "Tennessee's Partner," the leather thongs in Hector's ankles and the dust around his bobbing head. Such a culminating image Kenneth Henry has used with startling power in "The Wake" of the rosary beads scattered over the carpet at the moment of the hero's capitulation to hatred and despair. Other such images are the blood-spurting stump in "Dog Down the Deadlights," the blond hairpin in "I Couldn't Cry," the battered hand in "Curfew." In selection of the sharpened image, the safe guide for the young writer, as for the old, is not invention, but experience: only then can he expand his particularity with assurance, as Mark Twain does in *Huckleberry Finn* and Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*.

To genuine creative maturity, however, the mastery of classic form

INTRODUCTION

bears a priceless reward. For this purpose the writing of one thoroughly conceived short story, such as Boorstein's "Week-End" or Applebaum's "The Mermaids Singing" is a discipline every young writer should cherish. "It is ironic," writes Kenneth Henry, "that the experience and compulsion that drive a writer to write are without discipline or dignity. There is a wildness in the drive itself which I think has a greater beauty if it is compelled into a formal shape." In a true short story the writer sets down every image, every spoken word with a thorough understanding of its relevance to the central idea. In her remarkable story, "The Fly," for example, Katherine Mansfield creates the story of Old Woodifield to show us how the loss of his son has preyed on his mind so long as to unfit him for his work. But the character of Woodifield is carefully conceived only to illumine a similar crisis in the life of the boss, whose deepest loyalty after six years is still centered on his only son, lost like Woodifield's on the battlefields of France. A business man of the old school, the boss keeps himself resolute at his daily tasks, only now and then releasing his dam of sorrow in a private spell of weeping. Here, as always in a great short story, the forces of conflict bearing upon the central character are delicately balanced. In the character of the boss, his resolute mind, his bulldog restraint are opposed to the tenacious memories from which weeping is his only escape. Old Woodifield's stories of the graves in France loose unexpectedly a fresh surge of agony in the boss's soul. Even in tears now he can find no brief surcease. The death of the fly under blobs of ink from the boss's pen is a symbol of the boss himself overwhelmed at last under the batterings of sorrow. The conversation with Old Woodifield, in which the boss feels sorry for a broken man, has tipped the scales toward his own dissolution. The author's purpose once comprehended, we reread "The Fly" with rewarding care: now each image, each deft phrase of characterization comes alive as preparation for the central illumination of the boss's inner struggle. No bit of dialogue do we find, no description even of the boss's office that does not advance Katherine Mansfield's sharp, clear purpose. Not only to think through such a problem in the massing of personality strains and forces, but also to conceive of the culminating image, such as the episode of the fly, is a process of infinite pains and long fermentation. When one rereads Boorstein's "Week-End" and sees its closely knit structure, how each scene, each introspection, heightens the cul-

INTRODUCTION

minating illumination of the moral drama, one is aware that this, too, is a short story ripened only by long brooding on the necessities of form and proportion, no less than on Louise's spiritual dilemma. We can imagine that this short story, like Bret Harte's "Tennessee's Partner" and Galsworthy's "The Apple Tree," fulfills the creative function described by Edith Wharton: If the writer would let the theme of his story "grow slowly in his mind instead of hunting about for arbitrary combinations of circumstance, his tale would have the warm scent and flavor of a fruit ripened in the sun instead of the insipidity of one forced in the hot-house." •

Nothing is more valuable or rare in the young writer than a mature sense of crisis in character: that moment of hovering between two directions in the compass of life, each direction anticipated by motives rooted deep in his past. Thus in *Lord Jim*, when Jim's romantic idealism, his image of a heroic ego sustained by the brave men of his early books, is suddenly overwhelmed by his need to jump from the *Patna* and save his life, we have a true crisis and the temporary resolution of defeat. At the end of the story, when Jim's obsession for realizing in actuality the courage of his dreams is again brought to the test, he unhesitatingly seeks Doramin's presence for his own execution. Jim was "an obscure conqueror of fame, tearing himself out of the arms of a jealous love at the sign, at the call of his exalted egoism." As Doramin's pistol shot rang out, wrote Conrad, "the white man sent right and left at all those faces a proud and unflinching glance. Then with his hand over his lips he fell forward, dead." In this crisis of Jim's quest for fulfillment Conrad depicts the triumph of the human spirit over circumstance at the price of life itself. This is a classic theme for a crisis in character, perennially rich and instructive, as in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt*. The maturity of such a conception for a crisis in character, as Aeschylus and Sophocles have shown us, lies in a just appraisal of the power of ideas over the minds of men, of the upper reaches of the human spirit brought to extinction, as in *Lord Jim*, by an ideal of action to which multitudes aspire.

IX

Of the thirty-eight authors represented in this book, it is pertinent to ask if any are likely to be numbered among America's literary mas-

INTRODUCTION

ters a century hence. Impossible as it is to answer, this question directs our attention to the fortuitous factors decisive in creative destiny. The accident of a father's possessions, of talented friends, of robust energy, of birth in auspicious time and place—these may be more decisive than original endowment. As Henry George asks, would Shakespere have flowered had he been apprenticed to a cobbler or a chimney sweep? The disaster of tuberculosis, war's legacy, such as engulfed Sidney Lanier, the vitality of Herman Melville, bred by long years at sea, the necessity for bread in the mouths of loved ones—these are compasses borne on the ships of chance, guiding one man into the harbors of the great, another into oblivion. To achieve a place among the immortals, a writer must deposit five or ten masterworks in the stream of his country's literature. To write such great books requires perhaps twenty years of hard labor, such as Zola expended on his *Les Rougon Macquart*, not in spare time, but in continuous months of brooding and daily composition. But in order to devote unhurried years to literary labors, the young writer must first be successful with two or three books by which he escapes the drudgery of making a living at an advertising desk or at the bench of a clothes cutter. The initial advantage of two or three years of leisure fortunately granted to Tolstoi by the inheritance of his fortune, to Emerson by the legacy of Ellen Tucker, is more often denied than granted to young writers. No longer are we so naïve as to claim that a genetic drive in man will overcome the obstacles of poverty, the burdens of family responsibility, a decade of discouragement, and push him inevitably toward his rightful elevation among his peers. If a man possesses enormous energy, as did Mark Twain and Thomas Wolfe, then he can forego the subsidy of leisure: after earning his living each day, he sits down fresh and winds up anew his creative machinery. But if his strength is normally limited, he cannot gain the precious isolation in emotional security that every writer needs for fulfillment. If his parents have wealth, as did those of Dos Passos, or will continue to provide him with money, as did the mother of Thomas Wolfe, he has a subsidy at hand among his loved ones. Now and then a publisher of vast insight will subsidize a writer for years of leisure, as did John Farrar when Hervey Allen wrote *Anthony Adverse*. But these subsidies failing, the average young writer finds it impossible to follow the advice of Shaw, spoken by Tanner in *Man and Superman*: "The true artist will let his grandmother starve, his chil-

INTRODUCTION

dren go barefoot, his mother drudge for a living at seventy, sooner than work at anything but his art." Nor can we be so blind as to believe that the sixty Guggenheim Fellowships granted each year are a measure of the subsidies deserved by America's young writers. Even a million Guggenheims would not suffice to test the creative power of America's youth with two or three years of productive leisure. In America it is easier to vote money for a battleship than for the subsidizing of a single potential genius. Nor do we bestow upon a youth in a lifetime the subsidy of a tank or an airplane, with which in war we unhesitatingly entrust him to destroy the enemy. We are less expectant of genius and less prepared to kindle it into flame than was the slave society of ancient Athens, which supported in comfort the artists of the Parthenon.

In the destiny of the present writers, then, the capricious bestowal of leisure time is the most crucial factor. If they labor in the out-of-doors, as do Martin and Babikoff, they may exchange energy for leisure, but even after the first books are written, there is the problem of seeking a publisher, in which other fortuitous events accelerate or postpone publication for years on end. Not infrequently a publisher keeps a first novel for six months, at which rate it would be possible to submit the novel to twenty publishers in ten years, the artist meanwhile receiving many other reasons than the true one for its rejection. When a beginning writer can acquire a literary agent, he is fortunate. Literary agents, necessarily geared to the tactics of survival, find first authors unprofitable. When one of the authors of this book took his novel to a reputable literary agent, she accepted it reluctantly for reading, leaving a note to her colleague, which read as follows: "This man has been to sea and thinks that he can write. I tried to persuade him not to leave the manuscript, but he has paid his ten dollars. So . . ." When the author found this note, inadvertently left in the book by the assistant, he was not surprised, being a young man shockproof to the nether reaches of human nature. But the slip of paper left in the book is a fitting commentary on the unforeseen obstacles with which the young author must grapple. The more pronounced the unique vitality of his book, the more remote from the accepted fictional demands, the less likely he is to receive consideration not only from literary agents but also from editors of good will, who consult the sales managers and return reluctant rejections. It is absurd, therefore, in the face of such

INTRODUCTION

decisive but fortuitous circumstances, to hope for the present writers any vast subsidy of leisure time such as Henry James, the elder, bestowed upon his sons. The young author is usually unfitted by temperament to carry his book from door to door once a month. If, on the other hand, again by chance, he becomes acquainted with a sympathetic editor, as did Garland and Mark Twain with William Dean Howells, then he possesses an inestimable advantage that others may gain only from long years of further labor. One can only wish that every young author could send his book to the printer when he is ready and pay for it himself, as did Whitman his *Leaves of Grass* and Milton his *Areopagitica*. The birth of books is too vital a measure of national security in the perspective of American literature to be dictated by the exigencies of publishers and their markets. This is especially pertinent when one reflects on the fallibility of editors' judgments, such a book as Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers*, for example, being rejected by over twenty publishers before its acceptance by Farrar and Rinehart. The history of rejected manuscripts of seminal books in American literature alone would prove more encouraging to young writers than salutary to publishers. When one of our largest publishers, for example, examines eight thousand manuscripts a year and publishes only a few hundred, it is hardly to be expected that young writers can receive the serious attention from competent publishing critics that they deserve.

X

Once the writer has faced these realities, however, recognizing the chances of unmerited defeat, he must also remember that even in our inharmonious society a man of indomitable resolution can, like his great predecessors, overcome all obstacles. To achieve this end, the young writer must prepare himself over five years, ten years, reading daily the great fiction, steeping himself in Dickens, Hardy, Conrad, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, Twain, Hawthorne, Dreiser, and kindred masters, building within himself not only the criteria of evaluation stylistic and structural, but also a deep insight into the men and problems of other eras. He must maintain a deep respect for his own life and thoughts, and their meaning for posterity, recalling the simple credo of Hamlin Garland, "I am a competent witness," warming daily his

INTRODUCTION

ambition to leave an imperishable record, coveting as did Milton "an immortality of fame." It is hard for a young writer to imagine that Thackeray and Melville were once obscure and struggling, like himself, beset by the same doubts, hurried aloft by the same dreams. For himself he must envision a place beside them, prepared to transmute daily the flow of fresh life into language, if only a few hundred words, images of a face, a room, the sounds of a subway, the colors of leaves in Central Park. His own ripening the young writer can hasten by enforced isolation, by daily brooding and reading and writing, but best of all by seeking kindred spirits and flashing with their minds. When the time is propitious, when he feels himself ripe, he must seek out his great contemporaries, too, as did Emerson, Whitman, Hawthorne, Howells, and Stephen Crane, for the sting and memory of their presence, their words of encouragement, their judgment of his work, perhaps for the tardy realization that they, too, are only men like himself, blown into flame by other fires of long ago.

Not one book only, but a great pyramid of endeavor, like that of Balzac or Dickens, should be his dream, a plan for twenty years, thirty years, which no rebuff can daunt, or any estimate of his worth except his own. He must make of his life a work of art, drinking from the lakes of a thousand minds, seeing into the heart of life, beyond the eyes of a thousand faces. "Humanity is immense," wrote Henry James, "and reality has a myriad forms. . . . Experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness. . . ." To deposit the whole man in the stream of literature, his infinite shadings of thought and feeling, his deepest quests and questions, his lengthening of man to his tallest stature, his bottomless ugliness, all in characters more real than his friends, no less a plan of life should the young writer dream of nightly.

DON M. WOLFE

I

PROFILES OF YOUTH

Little Mule

FIRST CHAPTER OF A NOVEL BY JOHN BURRESS

I SAT on the back steps of the parsonage and ate my piece of cherry pie. The Missouri sun was low in the sky, and long dark shadows slanted across the back yard to the fence that divided the parsonage from the Zenith Baptist Church. Although it was April, there was a trace of chilliness in the shadows.

The pie was juicy, and after each bite I licked the sweet syrup from my fingers. I was four, and the niceties of eating were not important. No more important than jaybirds screaming in the cedar tree overhead, or death.

My brother sat beside me, alternately taking a bite of pie and wiping his eyes on the sleeve of his blue chambray shirt. Bud was seven, and more aware than I of the trouble that hushed the parsonage. I knew that Papa was sick, but I was more concerned about when I would be old enough to wear a shirt and overalls like Bud. I was still wearing rompers.

Two steps above us our three sisters sat. Beside them their pie lay in saucers, unheeded. I had never thought they resembled one another, but today they seemed curiously alike. They sat in similar poses, silent and listening. From behind the screened kitchen door came the sound of whispers and a spoon rattling in a glass.

"Do jaybirds eat pie?" I asked. I turned to Irene for an answer. Although she was the oldest, she was more apt to enter into my little games than the others.

No smile replaced the solemn look on Irene's face, and her blonde pigtails (just the color of my own hair) seemed stern as she answered shortly, "Be quiet, Jefferson. Don't you know Papa's sick?"

My lip quivered. Irene had never spoken sharply to me before. She did not seem like the same girl who would sit with me for hours,

AMERICAN VANGUARD

telling me stories of how she would act and what she would do when she became rich.

I picked up the saucer my pie had been on and licked the last of the juice from it. Over the rim of the saucer I saw Bud lean forward and put his chin on his hand. Slyly I moved my foot and kicked him. Instead of answering the challenge, he moved further away from me.

Ladybird reached down and patted my head. I leaned back and looked up at her. She appeared upside down to me. It seemed that the only thing holding her to earth was the big bow of ribbon on the end of one of her pigtails. I grinned at her, but she shook her head at me.

"You be good," she said. This did not worry me too much, for although she was only eleven, and younger than Irene, it was Ladybird who alternately bossed and mothered all of us when Mama wasn't around.

I turned my head and looked at Arnola. She came in between Ladybird and Bud in age, but because they both had reddish hair, and Arnola preferred boys' games to playing with dolls, I always thought of Bud and Arnola together. Now, though, her lips were moving. I could just barely hear what she was saying.

"I won't go back in there," she said. "I won't go back in there."

I was fascinated by my upside-down world, and let my eyes wander to where white clouds drifted between the red of Arnola's hair and the black of Ladybird's.

"Won't go back in where?" I asked.

"In that house," Arnola answered.

"Why not?"

"Hush, Little Mule," Ladybird said. I felt a little better. All day everyone had been calling me Jefferson instead of Little Mule, and it worried me. Using my real name had, in a way, been worse than having to sit all day without being able to play or even get myself dirty. All of us were still clean. My rompers would do for another day yet, and Bud's overalls still had a little crease left in them. The

LITTLE MULE

girls' white dresses were spotless, and their high button shoes were still shiny.

"I want to go see Mama," I said. I had been saying that all day, but got the same answer as I did this time.

"Hush!"

There was something wrong. Something I couldn't understand. My brother and sisters were here with me, and Mama and Papa were in the house. I knew that Papa was sick, but at some time or other all of us had been sick, so the fact in itself did not mean much to me. I felt left out of things. Every time I asked a question I was hushed.

"I want to go see Mama!" I said again, and began to cry. Before I could really get worked up to a good cry, I stopped. All of us became quiet. There had been a loud, sharp cry, quickly muffled, inside the house. The silence that followed was complete. The voices died away. There were no more spoons tinkling in glasses.

The five of us turned toward the door. Dr. James came and looked out for a moment, then disappeared again. Mrs. Agee, who had baked the cherry pie for us, came out the door, an uncertain smile on her face.

"We'll just run over to my house and get us some supper," she said. I rose to go, but Ladybird stopped me by suddenly putting her hand on my shoulder and shoving herself to her feet.

"How's Papa?" she asked.

"Now! Now!" Mrs. Agee said.

"Is Papa . . . ?" She didn't finish the question, but turned and started toward the kitchen door. Mrs. Agee caught her by the arm.

"Don't take on, Ladybird. Think of the others."

Ladybird stopped struggling. She turned back toward the rest of us, wiping her eyes. For the moment she looked like a woman, in spite of her pigtails.

"Papa's dead," she said simply, "and I don't guess there's anything we can do about it. We'll go over to Mrs. Agee's house and act like a preacher's young'uns ought to."

II

I was lonesome the next two days. No one paid much attention to me, or if they did, they picked me up or patted my head and said, "Poor little thing!" and smiled sadly. I cried a lot, although I did not know why I was crying. When I asked about Papa, they told me he had gone away, and I was not affected much, for Papa often went away for a day or two to preach at other churches. I saw Mama once or twice, but even she seemed distant with me.

Mrs. Agee waited until the last minute to put on her own neat black dress. She put on the rest of her clothes, including the black sailor straw hat with a small, subdued nosegay of violets; then, clad in her petticoats, she washed and dressed me, scolding softly to herself all the time.

"Now look at this," she said, picking up my clothes. "A body'd think a preacher's son would have something better'n a Buster Brown suit to wear to his own pappy's buryin', but I don't reckon it matters much, since he's such a young 'un. I know Brother Singleton didn't get paid none too regular. Not that this suit ain't good material. And it is blue, even if it ain't black, as it ought to be, but he's only a baby, so nobody'll notice."

After I was dressed and my unruly hair plastered to my head with water and a brush, I had to go sit on the front porch with the others while Mrs. Agee finished dressing herself. It seemed hours before she finally came out, dressed in a neat, but worn, black alpaca suit.

With a final glance to see that we were spotless, Mrs. Agee led the little procession to the Baptist Church. As we entered, heads turned and sober faces watched us. I felt important and self-conscious as Mrs. Agee led us silently down the center aisle to the front pew, then joined her husband on the left side of the church.

Directly in front of us, at the edge of the raised rostrum, was a bank of early spring flowers, cut and arranged by the people of the church. Nearly all the members of the congregation had contributed

LITTLE MULE

from their front yards or flower gardens. Canna and "elephant ear" leaves formed yellow-green backgrounds for riots of spring colors. Resting in the center of the flowers was a long black box with shiny brass handles. The box was so high that I could not see into it, although I craned my neck as I walked past.

Standing above the box, one hand resting lightly on the plain wood altar, Brother Marsh, the preacher who lived in Zenith but preached at the Cool Water Baptist Church five miles away from town, smiled down at us and nodded his head to the right. One by one the others filed past a seated black figure and sat down, leaving room for me. I hesitated and looked at the figure. It was dressed in black from the tips of the shoes that showed beneath the long, flaring skirt, to the wide-brimmed hat. A black veil covered the hat and fell in such thick folds over the face that the features could not be seen. As I hesitated, the figure reached out a hand, paper-white in contrast to all the black, and pulled me toward it.

"Sit down, Son," the figure said.

I sat beside my mother and examined her again. I couldn't understand why she was dressed all in black. Mama had always liked bright, pretty clothes. Once, on one of the rare occasions when she bought herself clothes, Papa had told her she was too pretty to be a preacher's wife.

Mama laughed and shook her head at him. She spun on her toe so that the full skirt billowed about her.

"Reckon a preacher's wife ain't human?" she asked. "Don't you think she has a right to like pretty clothes?"

Papa smiled his slow smile that meant he was pleased but did not want to show it.

"But you're plum gaudy, woman!"

I sensed something different from our regular Sunday church-going as I sat beside Mama. Behind me a few of the boys and girls in my Sunday school class sat with their parents, and I hoped they could see me in the front row, over the high back of the pew.

Brother Marsh dabbed at his brow with a white handkerchief, worn but spotless. He cleared his throat once or twice before he

AMERICAN VANGUARD

spoke. Feeling this was an event of some sort, I listened to him.

"Brothers and sisters, I have been accorded a great honor in being chosen to help lay Brother Singleton to rest. It is, indeed, an honor, but one I would just as soon not have. It is a hard task at any time to reconcile the separation of wife from husband, children from father, but it is twice as hard when the man was one of your best friends. . . ."

I felt a movement beside me. Mama had partially raised her veil and was holding a handkerchief to her face. I felt sick and wanted to leave the church, for I had never seen Mama cry before. I looked back at Brother Marsh, hoping he was almost finished.

"Born in Minston, Tennessee, on the fifteenth of October, 1883, Brother Rance Singleton departed this world on the tenth of April, 1916, aged thirty-three. . . ."

My attention wandered. I examined the flowers in front of me. My gaze became concentrated as a bee hovered over the blossoms. Faintly above the sound of Brother Marsh's voice I could hear the bee.

". . . we laughed at his crude speech, for Rance Singleton spoke with the crude speech of the wilderness, although he was not unlearned. . . ."

The bee swung in a wide circle. I ducked back when I thought he was coming too close to me. I raised my hand to fight him off, but Bud grabbed my arm and shook me. I remembered I was in church.

". . . had been with us for a little less than a year with his wife and three of their five children, when we knew there was a prophet amongst us. I am proud of the part I had in helping this man reach the heights he reached in Zenith. . . ."

From the corner of my eye I watched the bee. He flew in wider and wider circles, zooming close to bowed heads. I knew where he was by the way someone would jerk his head to one side, then roll his eyes to see what it was. The bee stopped his circling and flew in a zigzag toward the left wall, then straightened and was gone through an open window.

Beside me Mama was crying openly, but softly. I began crying,

LITTLE MULE

too, because Mama was crying. I turned my head away so I could not see her.

“ . . . we were so moved by his words that we got him ordained as a minister. I don't think there was a dissenter among us. That would have been enough for most men. Brother Singleton could have sat back . . . ”

Outside the window a live-oak tree hung its branches down between me and the sun. The thick, greenish-black leaves hung still and motionless in the quiet morning sunshine. Faintly I could hear the creaking of the pump behind the church as someone pumped himself a drink. I decided I was thirsty and turned to ask Mama if I could go get me a drink, but her head was still bowed.

“ . . . He, as a carpenter, examined the old church and told us it was about ready to cave in on our heads; we despaired, but did he? No. He went among you, pleading, begging, almost threatening, until he got enough money together to start on the new church. . . . ”

The colors of the window next to the open one drew my attention from the live-oak tree. I looked at the picture the pieces of colored glass made. A man, wearing something that looked like a dress, held a lamb in one arm while supporting himself with a long stick in the other hand. I liked the kindness in his eyes, but his beard looked unreal. It was even and fell in soft waves from his face. The only man I knew who had a beard was Ol' Man Joshua Nelson who prayed so long and loud in church on Sundays. His beard was straggly and always stained with tobacco spit.

There was no action in the picture, so I turned my head. Brother Marsh was looking in my general direction. I folded my hands and tried to listen to him again.

“ . . . not enough money left to hire a crew of men to do the building, so he took off his coat, put on his carpenter's apron, and did more than one man's share, working from sunup to sundown. . . . ”

I tried to concentrate on Brother Marsh, but my eyes looked on past him to the wall behind him. My gaze followed the wall up to

AMERICAN VANGUARD

the ceiling. The walls and ceiling were alike, made of close-fitting wood, varnished so their natural color showed through. My head leaned further and further back so that I could see more of the ceiling. Bud shook me once more, and I straightened, then defiantly slid forward on my seat and slumped against the back of the pew.

" . . . It is believed that while working on this very church in rain and sun alike he caught the sickness that at last laid him to rest, although he stayed with us two years longer to see that the church could stand on its own feet." Brother Marsh paused and wiped his face again. He looked down at us and at Mama's bowed head. "There is no immediate comfort for sorrow, but there is comfort in the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel, according to St. John: 'Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' . . ."

III

When Brother Marsh finished his sermon, the congregation stood while the long black box was lifted and carried down the aisle and out into the sunlight. They remained standing while we followed Mama as she walked slowly after the box. Outside we stood on the steps and watched as the bank of flowers was transferred to the black wagon into which the long black box had been placed. The wagon was boxed in, covered with scrolls and carvings, all painted a shiny black.

For a few minutes I was interested in the flowers, but my attention wandered on to the four white horses that were hitched to the wagon. Each had a long black plume attached to his forehead that waved gently back and forth as the horses pulled against their check-reins.

At last the job of loading the flowers was completed, and the wagon drove away. A double-seated buggy took its place, and Mama led us up to it. The driver jumped from his seat and helped us get seated, then climbed back to his place and drove slowly after the black wagon.

LITTLE MULE

The feeling of importance I had felt inside the church came back to me. I turned sideways in my seat so I could see the other vehicles that followed us. There were buggies with and without tops, with one or two seats, and of all colors. There were wagons, too, showing that the farmers who lived around Zenith had given up a day in the field to attend this event. Most wonderful of all to me were the automobiles. There were three in the procession. Their loud growls as their motors raced caused horses and mules to rear up and snort, but the automobiles kept their places instead of dashing down the road and stirring up clouds of dust as they usually did.

As we left the last house of the town behind and went past the Blue Goose Saloon, I turned my head, for I had been told that it was a bad place. When the road turned and followed the railroad tracks for a short distance, I looked hopefully along them for a train, but none was in sight. The tracks ran straight across the flat Missouri land and converged and disappeared in a little grove of trees.

I gave up hopes for a train and turned back to Mama, but she still did not notice me, so I looked out at the newly plowed farm land as it moved slowly past us.

IV

At the grave I stood alone. My sisters and brother were on the opposite side and, near me, a man stood on each side of Mama, gently supporting her. Tears stung my eyes again, and I turned to hide my self-pity. There were mounds of earth all around us. Here and there someone had put a bunch of flowers on a grave, but they had already wilted in the sun. There were square pieces of stone at the ends of some of the mounds. Others were decorated with pieces of broken glass and china. Here and there a whole bottle or plate lay, shining and winking in the sun. Early spring flowers and greening vines grew on many graves. An apple tree spread its branches above us, its blossoms just beginning to open. Overhead a lone buzzard wheeled slowly in the deep blue sky, so far above us that I had to strain my eyes to see him at all.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

Mama wept aloud as Brother Marsh spoke above the open grave. As the black box was lowered into the hole, Mama moved back as though pushed. The two men tightened their grips on her arms, and another man rushed forward with a bucket of water, ladling a dipperful out as he came. Mama shook her head at him and half turned, breaking away from her supporters. Her sudden movement loosened the black veil from her face, and I saw her eyes, swollen and red.

As I looked in Mama's eyes, I knew, this time she really saw me. She knelt in the dirt, and I walked over to her. She smiled down at me, and her eyes almost disappeared in the puffy folds of her face.

"I'm hongry, Mama," I said. The excitement that I did not understand had taken away my appetite, but now that Mama was with me, my hunger returned.

"Yes, baby," she said. "We're going home now. I'll cook us all a good supper."

Jeannie

A SHORT STORY BY MADELYN HARRIS

JANET was eleven. She liked to walk down the road on hot summer days and feel the spots of soft tar under her feet. She liked to sit where the grass was soft and deep, or on top of the hill where the tall pines grew. Then she would turn her serious little face up to the sky and think.

A pleasant sight, a little girl on top of a green hill stretching her legs that seem suddenly to have grown too long, late afternoon sun wanly touching dark loose braids, and great black eyes looking solemnly towards the sky.

In autumn time, October, the great black eyes had peered out of the porch window, and a blunt little nose was pressed against the cold pane. Harriet had come. Poppa, who had called for her at the station, followed a few steps behind, carrying the black square suitcase. Janet remembered her sister-in-law's heavy anxious look as she walked up the brown dirt path towards the house. Then suddenly the house became alive and warmlike because Harriet was here at Farm-house, going to have her baby at Farm-house, and now the whole *place* seemed as if it was getting born!

Because this had always been a quiet house. Even when Hal was here, it was a quiet house. Poppa, long and thin with his giant hands, would come from the fields, or from town, or from Barry's store and grunt prices, and farm-help, and rain. In winter Poppa would drive Janet to school, never saying a word, but then, kindlike, quietlike, when she got up to go, "Be a good girl, Jeannie. Be a good girl."

Momma called her Janet. Momma didn't talk kindlike. She talked loud and sure; yet it was a good thing to hear her talk. You knew what she was saying, and you *did* what she was saying. If she said, "Janet, stop pickin' at your head," you *stopped* pickin' at your head,

and if she said, "Janet, ain't it a lovely day!" you breathed deep and *knew* it was a lovely day!

"Janet," Momma had said, "you run up and shut the windows in Hal's room," and turning to Harriet explained, "Things is musty since Hal's been away." You'd think Hal'd just gone away the way she talked. Hal'd been away from home five years now. Janet tried to think of the way Hal used to be at Farm-house. Couldn't remember her brother very well; only that he was tall, like Poppa, and quiet like Poppa, and kind like Poppa. One thing Janet remembered more than that. It was Hal, brown hair flying, a long boy chasing her through the tall grass fields.

But that was long ago, and soon Hal left Farm-house. He was eighteen when he went away, went to college to study agriculture. Then, when Christmas or springtime came, he'd visit for a little while. They'd talk to him then, Momma and Poppa, like he was a man. And Poppa'd tell him about prices, and farm-help, and rain, and Momma'd ask him if he'd want more soup. And then he didn't come home vacation times so often. Hal had a girl, and her name was Harriet. Momma complained something 'bout, "He ain't outgrewed his toddlin' pants," but Poppa said, "Hal's a good boy." And Hal never finished agriculture school. He married the girl whose name was Harriet and moved away, away to the city where the girl whose name was Harriet lived, and worked for her Paw there who owned a hardware store. And then the war had come, and Hal had gone. Soon after, Harriet's Paw had died. So Harriet came to live with them, because she never did have a mother, never since she was a baby.

Poppa called Harriet, "Daughter," not "Harriet," like he called his girl, "Jeannie." He said, "Daughter," kind of proud and quiet. And Momma said she was glad Harriet had come—" 'most like having Hal home again." But Janet thought that Momma was glad, and sometimes she was sorry too—and sometimes, Janet thought, why Momma was glad and sorry at the *same* time. She was glad, it seemed to Janet, when Harriet did a foolish thing, and Momma could say to Poppa, "Young folks don't think. They only act. Havin'

JEANNIE

a baby! Why, she's no more'n a baby herself!" But then she was sorry, sorry when Harriet cooked vegetables and they all came out so fresh and green (Momma's always came out yellowlike), and Harriet explained 'bout retaining minerals, and little water, and things; then Momma looked sorry that Harriet had come. But when Hal's wife knitted baby things, and wrote long letters to Hal, and when Harriet did a thoughtful thing, then, then Janet thought, Momma was glad and sorry at the same time!

Harriet had come in October, and all through the winter months she and Janet would talk. It wasn't the kind of talk Janet always understood. Mostly she'd talk about Hal. Janet couldn't understand it. It was like the loneliness of a rainy day, or like the sadness of a quiet song, or like the stillness of deep snow. And how could it be sad, and lonely, and still when Harriet talked about happy things, about how Hal whistled when he was thinking, or how much he liked hot corn? Still, Janet didn't mind listening, because she loved Harriet, and she loved her because Harriet had blue eyes, and Harriet had long hair, and Harriet, Harriet talked to her. She didn't talk to anybody else; she only talked to her.

II

And so the winter months went by, and April came, and the dead breathed, and the forsythia bloomed, bloomed their yellowness on the dark earth.

But Janet didn't see the forsythia as she walked to school that young spring morning. She thought all the way how bad she was, and how every day she was growing worse. She hadn't gone to school at all the other day. She had just sat on top of the hill making dreams and chewing grass. And every day it was harder going back to school, because every day was closer to report-card time.

Her arithmetic paper had come back on Monday, and written on top in blue pencil, neatly written, was, "37." And below, at the end of the paper, written in blue pencil, written neatly was, "See me after class," with an exclamation mark at the end. Janet didn't

AMERICAN VANGUARD

want to see "her" after class, but at the end of the day she stopped in front of Miss Brenner's black wooden desk, and Miss Brenner said in her neat blue voice, "Janet, you are going to fail arithmetic. Your marks get worse and worse, and you are going to fail arithmetic. And if you do, I'm not so sure you will get promoted this term. Do you understand me, Janet Karfield?" and Janet shook her head yes, and wondered what fat Miss Brenner with her tremendous bosom looked like when she had no clothes on. And the next day Janet hadn't gone to school at all. She just sat on top of the hill supposing, and when she came home, and her mother asked, "Janet, how you doin' in school? Seems to me you don't do no studying these days late," Janet said she was doing fine, just fine.

So Janet walked to school this April day, and didn't notice April there. She waited endless, endless hours for the bell to ring, and walked home from school, and ate her supper, and talked to Harriet, and then she went to bed. She lay in the comfortable darkness of her little room and thought.

She was sure to fail arithmetic, and she was scared. All month, when everyone went to Saturday night show, Janet had to stay at Lewis' place. *She* couldn't go. That was her punishment for failing arithmetic, and lying that she hadn't. And Momma told Mrs. Lewis *why* she couldn't go, and Janet was ashamed.

Janet didn't know why the teachers always said she wasn't stupid, only lazy. How did they know? Her work was bad enough for her to be stupid, and she *was* stupid. Otherwise how could she sit in the last row all the time? Otherwise why was she always the last one done with her work? But they always said she was bright, only lazy, and her mother would say, "Lazy . . . lazy . . . lazy . . ." And she was surely going to fail again, and fail for the term! What would Momma say? What would she do? How could Janet show her a "D" next to arithmetic again, and what would happen if she got left back? If Momma could only be like other mothers and not care too much, or maybe say, "Jeannie, you try to do better next time." Just a *little* thing, and she *knew* she would do better next time, Janet thought as she drew the covers closer around her neck.

JEANNIE

But it wasn't only that. She knew she was not good. She just wasn't any good. She couldn't bottle plums, like Irene Josephs could. She didn't want to. She didn't even want to put her dirty clothes away. And worse than anything, she was a liar, and *that* was a sin! And the strangest thing was she didn't always *have* to lie. You *have* to lie when you're in trouble. You shouldn't, but you *have* to. But not all her lies were "*have to*" lies. She knew even as she told them they would be found out. Sometimes she would say she had been adopted, and sometimes that she had traveled through Europe, and sometimes that her family had once been very rich, but now they were very, very poor. And then she'd tell real *silly* lies, like the one she had told little Selma about the elephant-man, and the one about God being a cloud in the sky. And she thought, as she lay in bed, that she had probably told more lies than is *possible* to tell in eleven years. They just tumbled out, just like some people breathe. And she cried in her little room because she was wicked, and because she was going to keep on being wicked.

But somehow, sometimes she thought she was wonderful! She thought she was wonderful when she threw a ball. There was no girl who could throw a ball like her. And she could run, faster than a car, almost. Her little legs would push up the ground behind her, and she would fly. All the boys wanted her on their team, but she didn't play with them any more. She was eleven, and one day when they were playing ball, somebody yelled, "Look at the tomboy. She's just like a boy." And she didn't *want* to be just like a boy, so she didn't play with them any more. And she thought she was wonderful because she could draw. Her mother said it was "right good," and it *was*! When she drew a tree, it *looked* like a tree, only *more* so. And it looked even more so, because her tree could have strange colors, and a *real* tree was only brown and green. And that was wonderful! Wasn't it?

But deep down she *knew* she was no good. She was going to fail. She was surely going to fail. Janet got up from bed. She closed the top of the window, and opened the bottom, opened it wide. And then she did a strange thing. She stuck both her feet out the bed-

AMERICAN VANGUARD

room window, out into the chill night air and wiggled her toes. She hoped—if she could only catch a cold—it would be a *bad* cold—and it would grow much worse—until she was almost dead. *Then* they would come to her, gather round her bed, speaking soft comforting words. And then they would feel sorry for having been so mean. Her report card would come, but they wouldn't even notice the marks, they'd be so concerned. They'd plead, "Jeannie, Jeannie, nothing matters as long as you get well." And maybe she'd get well, and maybe she'd just feel like dying—for spite!

III

But that was only dream-talk. She didn't want to die. She *knew* she didn't want to. She had to think of something real. Her report card would be coming soon. Every day brought it nearer. And what was she to do? She took her feet from out the window, and put them under the covers again, and thought, and thought for a very long time. Gradually, slowly, the plan came. She would tell Harriet, that's what she'd do. She didn't know just how it'd help, but Harriet would listen, and that was good. Somebody to listen, that would be good, and Janet Karfield fell asleep.

But Janet didn't tell Harriet the next day, or the day after, or the day after. Harriet thought she was good, and Janet wanted her to keep on thinking that way. And so April faded into May, and rain washed down forsythia buds, and quick green leaves covered April's bloom, and the earth was singing with the freshness of May.

Janet got up very early on that May morning. She had thought the whole thing out. She had even prepared the words. She would say, "Harriet, I know you are my friend," and Harriet would shake her head yes, and then Janet would tell her. She would say, "I am wicked, and I lie all the time, and I never do my work in school because I am stupid, and I am going to get my report card, and I am going to fail arithmetic, and maybe get left back." And Harriet would listen, and understand, and forgive her. And if *someone* would only understand and forgive her, she *knew* she would never

JEANNIE

be *bad* again. Maybe Harriet would think of something to do, but that really didn't matter. It would be good anyway, because Janet would have told somebody about her wickedness. It wouldn't be all on her heart, so she couldn't play and laugh any more. All through school she thought of what she would say, and how this was going to be a great important day, and how something frightening and wonderful and new was going to happen to her today!

IV

Janet walked to the top of the hill. And it is a pleasant sight, a little girl on top of a tall hill. But Janet didn't make a pleasant sight. She lay down on her belly and cried, and kicked her feet against the ground and cried. Slowly she lifted her head from the ground, and wiped her nose in the palm of her hand. Janet, right after school, had gone to Harriet's room. She had started, "Harriet, I know you are my friend," and quietly, sadly, told the story. And when she had finished, Harriet just looked at her. And there was laughter in back of her even tones when she said, "Janet, you are a very silly little girl." And now Janet knew. She *was* a very silly little girl, and a very foolish little girl, very foolish because she had told Harriet at all. On the quiet hill the crickets hopped the words, and the wind breathed the words, and the stillness echoed the words—"Janet, you are very silly. You are very, very, very silly. You're a silly, silly, silly, silly, silly, little girl,—and if you do fail, I'm not so sure you will get promoted this term. You won't get promoted this term, Janet Karfield. Do you understand me, Janet Karfield? Do you understand me, Janet, Janet Janet Karfield?"

She knew now very clearly what she must do. She couldn't go back to the house. She couldn't live there any more. She had eleven dollars and forty cents for Christmas money, and she would take it. She would leave tonight before the yellow card could come. Some strange kind person would take her in, and keep her for her *own* little girl. The house would be large and warm with rugs on all the floors, and beautiful pictures on the walls. And the kind lady would

AMERICAN VANGUARD

talk to her, and *make* her different. Tonight, when Momma and Poppa were asleep, she would tiptoe down the stairs, and open the front door to a new world. On her dresser top a note would read:

Momma dear,

I am going away to grow tall and straight like you told me to grow. Your Mother's Day present is in my bottom drawer. If it don't fit, keep it anyway to remember me. Tell Poppa that I love him, and tell Harriet that I don't wish her no harm, but she's not what I thought. Don't worry about me because I'm going to come back, and then you will be proud of me.

Your,
Jeannie

V

From the top of the hill Janet saw her, and it was hard for Harriet to climb now, with her heaviness and all. But she climbed, coming closer and closer. Janet thought she would run away, but she sat perfectly still on the mold of the green hill. And Harriet heaved and came, and she bent down with difficulty and sat next to Janet, and took both her hands, and held them tightly, and didn't let them go.

The hill was quiet, and the yellow grass breathed stillness, and the tall pines pointed their heads to the sky. And it is good to be on a hill—because a hill is between the ground and the sky.

Bathroom Dilemma

A SHORT STORY BY REBECCA BOORSTEIN

I ALWAYS tell it now as a very funny story. I suppose it *is* funny, but it certainly broke up the beginning of what might have been a solid friendship. Of course, we were still in the same home room, and we still took most of our classes together, but being seated in alphabetical order (I'm a *B*, and Janet was over with the *S*'s), I could always get out ahead of her and lose myself in the crowded corridor. Not that Janet chased me. She took up with Aline McCormick soon after that. I'd see them walk arm in arm across the yard to the next class, maybe looking my way, and when Janet would probably make some crack, they would squeeze each other in a giggling spasm.

I suppose Janet would never have noticed me in the first place had we not both moved into the neighborhood in the middle of the term, and both being new students, we instinctively huddled together. I should have realized from the beginning that we had nothing in common, for I had already been there two weeks when she came, and I knew the neighborhood better than she did. Or maybe I was just learning what she had always known, since up until this time we had always lived so far out in the suburbs, it was practically country, and there wasn't anything like Hanover Boulevard out there. We had moved into a grey frame one-story house on 31st Street, pretty much like the houses we had always lived in—sprawling, not from design, but from old age. And you couldn't live a couple of blocks over from the Boulevard without realizing there was something ignominious in living in a house at all—much less a house like that. It even had a porch.

By the time I met Janet and found out she lived there, I knew the Boulevard pretty well. It was the big residential-apartment

AMERICAN VANGUARD

street—block after block of pale refined brick and glittering long sweeps of casement windows—but more impressive than the brick and more glittering than the glass were the names the apartments were called, for they had names. Dorchester House, The Derby, Sussex Arms, the Windsor, Arlington Manor, Hanover Court. God, I would have given anything to live in an Arm (or is it Arms?) or a Manor, or a Court, to be able to walk through town trailing clouds of English gentility. And what was it like to live in the finest of all, those of brashest design, of fairest brick, of most glittering glass—those that bore proudly names of one word, titles of nobility: The Windsor, The Chesterfield, The St. George, like the big movie stars you call by just the last name.

When Janet told me where she lived and I told her where I lived, it didn't seem to make any difference, but I realized later she was so new she probably didn't know there were just old houses on 31st. Anyway, I began to wait for her to come out after class, and we'd spend study periods and eat lunch together, and when Miss Compton picked out both our poems to read to the class in English composition, we spent one whole afternoon in the drugstore, talking about poetry and our futures. Nothing was definitely settled, but we had the idea we'd go through college together and collaborate later on a long epic poem, because Miss Compton had said no one wrote long epic poems any more, good ones, that is, like the *Iliad* and *Beowulf* and *Paradise Lost*. We figured it would be easier working on one together, because when I got tired, Janet could spell me, and when she got tired, I could take over for a while. We stayed at the drugstore discussing long epic poems so long that I was late getting home, and Sis had already set the table, and everybody was getting ready to sit down to eat. Mom was pretty mad about waiting for me, but I still had to make a dash to the bathroom first because I had been holding in all afternoon, our talk was so interesting.

When I got back to the table, Mom let me have it. "Sara-Ellen, you go right back to the bathroom and *wash your hands!* God knows, I come from a clean family and I'm going to keep this house clean and I'll raise all my children clean, if it kills me and them too!"

BATHROOM DILEMMA

"Though it's probably just your father's blood telling in you," she added, as she always did. Mom was a crank on that subject, and Dad had never quite come up to her standard. Even when they got in a fight over something else, she'd manage to bring that in, too. Cleanliness didn't come second to godliness with her—they were right up there together, neck and neck.

But things like that made me hate our bathroom in particular. Mom hadn't even looked at my hands; she just *knew* I hadn't washed them. If there had been any water run in the washbowl, it would have been heard all over the house. And it wasn't only the uncouth sound effects; the whole look of the place made me squirm fastidiously whenever I thought of it. It bore no resemblance to the ones pictured in the ads—the toilet tissue and towel and soap and plumbing fixtures and Drano ads. White tile and gleaming metal and streamlined shapes. There wasn't any tile in ours, only a bathroom-green paint that peeled whenever it approached a fixture, and the toilet made no bones about its basic structure, and the washbowl was badly stained and rough and grey in spots where the enamel had worn off, and the bathtub was the worst of all. It had legs. I couldn't make up my mind which was worse—a house with a porch or a bathtub with legs. Sometimes I'd plunk for the porch, because that was outside where everybody could see it, but when I'd take a bath and drop my cloth or the soap over the side and have to grope under the dark, roachy cavern between the tub and the floor, I'd plunk for the tub with legs.

I was working on a private theory of inner television at this time—like mental telepathy, only with images instead of thoughts. I believed if I shut my eyes tight and concentrated hard enough, I could "see" Janet in the Sussex Arms. And I could, I really could. I'd see her in the living room, like the living rooms in the library copy of *House and Garden*, with drapes and lots of mirrors and light and those parquet floors and soft pastel rugs. I'd see her in her own bedroom, where there was a cute double-decker maple bed and a chest all painted over with costumed figures, and a dressing table with a wide, wide chintz flounce. And I saw her brushing her teeth

AMERICAN VANGUARD

or taking a bath or washing her hands or her hair in one of those de luxe bathrooms. I could never ask her what it was really like, of course, because then, if only out of politeness, she'd ask about mine.

Then one day, when we were too late to snatch one of the small side tables in the school cafeteria, we sat down at a large one with several other girls. Aline McCormick was there, and it was she who brought up the subject of recordings. She started drooling about all the Crosby records she had, and Janet said she didn't have many Crosbys, but she had the whole *Show Boat* album. Cressy Sedgwick, who had a player too, started in on her collection, and the first thing you knew, we were all going over to Aline's house that afternoon and have a session. Janet and Cressy were to stop off and pick up their records on the way, and I was invited, too, even though I didn't have anything to bring.

We met outside the south door of the school building and walked by Cressy's house first. Janet was the only one who lived in an apartment on the Boulevard, but Cressy's house was brick, and looked about as good as you could expect a house to look. Then we turned down Griswold Street and walked over to the Boulevard. I suppose Cressy and Aline were just as excited as I was about going into the Sussex Arms and seeing what it was really like inside. But when we got through the revolving door into the lobby, Janet waved us to a halt, and said, "You can wait for me here while I run up—won't take me but a sec." So Aline and Cressy sat down on one of the long marble benches, and I stood gazing thoughtfully at the sand and cigarette butts in a large stone vase, with my hip thrown out at a casual angle and trying hard to look as if I were relieved by not having to bother to go up. Then Janet came back before she reached the elevator and asked me to go up with her to help carry the records down. She asked me, and not Cressy or Aline, but that was probably because I was standing and they were comfortably seated on that long marble bench.

As we went up in the elevator, my heart was in my throat, not because of the motion of the elevator, either. Janet said, "Eight,

BATHROOM DILEMMA

please," to the operator, and as we went out, "Thank you," with just the right politeness that showed she was a lady and not that she meant it. I hoped I would have a chance to see the whole apartment, thinking maybe we would have to pass through all the rooms to get to Janet's, but even if we didn't, I could always see the bathroom. I had only to mention I needed to use it.

But when we walked into the living room, there was Janet's mother with three other ladies, sitting at a card table in what struck me as an awful silence, watching a deck of cards being hush-hushed into four separate little piles. I crossed the room on Janet's heels and saw nothing but the back of her head, the straight clean part down the middle and the two bunches of straw-blond hair drawn neatly to each side and plaited down to end in black velvet ribbons. It wasn't until Janet had almost finished gathering the records she wanted to take, that I got my nerve back. I could see we would hustle right out, through the hall that had led from the living room straight to Janet's room, but I could still whisper an urgent request. I did, and Janet said, "Sure, it's right outside my door, first door on the left."

It must have been the most beautiful room in the whole place; white tile halfway up the walls and all over the floor, and a toilet curved as luxuriantly as Mae West, and the washbowl one gleaming white pedestal, and thick pastel-tinted towels hung so precisely on chromium rods, you knew no member of that family ever used one not properly assigned to him. And the tub rose magnificently right out of the floor. I remember standing there and wishing I really needed to "go," everything was fixed so that it would have been more a luxury than a necessity, but I knew I couldn't even if I tried, so I didn't bother to sit down. I just stood there and looked and looked, and then I flushed the toilet and closed the door reverently behind me. Janet gave me half the records, and we left quietly, in order not to disturb the ladies in the living room, who were dealing out another hand.

Not until we got in the elevator to go down, did it dawn on me that I had forgotten to run some water in the washbowl. There

AMERICAN VANGUARD

had been only one wall between us, and I knew Janet had heard the toilet flush, and she could not have helped but notice that there was no follow-through. I felt myself getting beet-red, and I didn't look at Janet, but lifted the records higher and placed my cheek against the cool shellac. When I did glance at her in the lobby, I couldn't tell anything from her face, but I knew how polite she was, and that even though she had me typed as "the girl who doesn't even wash her hands after she has 'gone,'" she would never show it to me by any sign or word. But I knew—and it sank into me that afternoon that there was nothing I could say or do that would erase that impression from her mind.

I was never at ease with her after that. I thought of all sorts of ways to keep from being caught alone with her, and, as I said, she didn't exactly chase me. At first I didn't worry about her spreading talk; I thought, being such a lady and living in the Sussex Arms, she'd keep it to herself. But when I saw her walking across the Yard with Aline, giggling like that, I figured she had probably said to Aline at least, "Oh, Sara-Ellen, she's the kind of girl who doesn't even wash her hands after she's 'gone,'" and that probably went over big with Aline, who never did like me.

I consoled myself a little with the thought that maybe it was just as well it had happened like that and we had never become real close friends. Because we had nothing in common, when you got down to it. If we had become real close friends, she would have invited me over to her house and then I'd have to take her home with me, and sooner or later she'd have to "go," there's no getting around that; and when she reached up to pull the string that flushed *ours*, she'd have been bound to realize, too, that we had nothing in common, after all.

Privilege

A SHORT STORY BY PHYLLIS GAINFORT

THE late winter sun illuminated the red veins in Mrs. Beatty's face as she stood in her place at the head of the table. She waited until the dining room was quiet enough for her to hear the dishes being scraped in the pantry. Then she picked up her list and intoned in the voice she used every morning in chapel when she led the Episcopal prayer: "Curtis, William, Pratt, and Robbins may go riding this afternoon. All the rest will meet Miss Lang for sports in the front hall. You are to be dressed for a walk. Trapp, Smith, and Allen, I believe, are to report for extra study hall at five. Those in A Group who have less than three demerits may go downtown for half an hour."

She paused and listened for the stir of excitement which always followed announcements of extra privilege. There was only a small stir; there were two girls in A Group ashamed to be singled out. "Anyone bringing back food from town will automatically be in C Group next week." There was another pause, a longer one. The girls became conscious of Mr. Beatty shifting his glass around a rim of water on the table. "At this time Mr. Beatty and I would like to announce a surprise we have for you. Your lovely Christmas gifts and messages made us want to give the school a gift. And after much thought we decided to treat you to a movie." The eighth graders caught their breath and gave a feeble round of applause. Mrs. Beatty smiled down at her husband. He was still engaged in pushing his glass slowly around the rim of water. "So we have made arrangements to take you to see the *Adventures of Robin Hood* next Saturday afternoon."

There was a shuffling and whispering from the ninth grade, a titter from the seniors. Mrs. Beatty's eyes focused on Anna Ma-

AMERICAN VANGUARD

trocles. Anna's eyes were bulging; her mouth was moving as if she were speaking to an imaginary audience. Anna turned to smile at Kate, who was preoccupied with her water glass—with pushing it around her knife. When she saw Mrs. Beatty's eye, her face dissolved into its normally wistful expression. "You may be excused," said Mrs. Beatty. "I would like to see Anna Matrocles and Kate Prell in my study."

II

Mrs. Beatty entered her study and slid the paneled door shut. She lit a cigarette and listened to the two girls waiting outside the door. She watched the cigarette burn between puffs and waited for a knock. When it came, she was seated behind her desk.

"Come in." The door slid open. She looked at them both and finally said, "All right, Kate. I'll see Anna later."

"What happened at lunch?" said Mrs. Beatty.

"I'm sorry I laughed."

"What happened?"

"Don't blame Anna, Mrs. Beatty. She made a face, and we laughed."

"She was imitating someone?" said Mrs. Beatty.

"Yes."

"Me? She was mimicking me?" Kate nodded, and Mrs. Beatty took out her cigarettes. "Sit down, Kate. I suppose I could let you smoke as long as you're in my study. This is not a precedent, though."

"Oh, no," Kate said. "Gee, thanks, Mrs. Beatty." She sat in the leather chair near the desk. "I think the movies a swell idea. Awful nice of you and Mr. Beatty."

"Well, we thought you deserved it." Mrs. Beatty watched the smoke from her cigarette catch in the rays of sunlight. "Tell me, Kate, does Anna spend every afternoon in your room?"

"Most afternoons."

PRIVILEGE

"Don't shut yourself off from the rest of the girls because of Anna, Kate."

"Oh, they are all there, too. They are crazy about Anna. She's a hoot."

"With her imitations?" asked Mrs. Beatty.

"Yeh, you ought to see her do Miss Humphrey in math class when she trips over the waste basket. She can do anyone. There's one of her father selling ham to a man who can't understand his Greek accent. She sure is funny."

"Still, Kate, I wouldn't see too much of Anna. After all, she's a day girl, and it's best to stick with the boarders. . . . Besides, next year at college—Anna can't very well come up to see you there."

"Oh, sure, we have it all planned."

"I doubt if she'll fit in with your college friends. Anna's a dear; I know that, too, Kate, but we must not forget that not everyone can overlook her background. Then there is her face—" Mrs. Beatty crushed out her cigarette.

"I don't notice the scars any more."

"You are kind. But you must admit the scars are startling to strangers." Mrs. Beatty pushed back her chair. "You'd better hurry if you want to make sports. And tell Anna to come in." As Kate left, Mrs. Beatty emptied the ash tray and put away her cigarettes.

III

Anna paused in the doorway. Mrs. Beatty thought she seemed to sniff the air. "You don't have to pose in the doorway," said Mrs. Beatty. "Well, Anna," she said, as the girl stood in front of the desk with her weight thrown forward on one foot. "Well?"

"You wanted to see me?" said Anna.

"I want an apology."

"Sorry."

"Sorry for what?"

"For laughing."

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"What about the imitation? Am I so very funny?"

"Didn't mean any harm. Honest I didn't."

* Mrs. Beatty wondered if Anna would always stand with her weight on that one foot. She wondered if she could make her move. "No, I suppose a clown is always a clown."

Anna shifted her weight back to both feet. "I'm sorry," she said.

"Well, Anna, I won't hold it against you. But I am disappointed in you." Mrs. Beatty felt for her handkerchief and held the clean corner of it near her eye. "It was not easy for the school to take you. But after the accident—Mr. Beatty and I have tried to be good to you. There's been criticism. The girls don't always understand . . ."

"You mean my face," Anna said.

Mrs. Beatty noticed that the afternoon sun struck Anna's scars. The scars were very red. "Yes, your face. Of course, Anna, Mr. Beatty and I don't notice it. But the girls, the younger girls—. And then some of the parents don't seem to understand about your family. But you know how fond Mr. Beatty and I are of you. You know that."

"Yes," said Anna. "I guess so."

"You want to get along with the girls, don't you?"

"Yes."

"If you wouldn't push yourself forward so—if you wouldn't clown and make fun of people, then the girls wouldn't notice such things. They wouldn't notice your face. It's those imitations."

"I thought the kids liked 'em," said Anna. "Honest I did."

"You can't tell about girls, Anna. Why, when Kate was in here, she was talking about your imitations."

"She doesn't like them?" Anna said.

"You didn't know the girls were just laughing at you?" Mrs. Beatty smiled at Anna in a kind way. "For your own good, don't go to the girls' rooms too often. I don't want to see you hurt." Mrs. Beatty pushed back her chair. "That's all I have to say, Anna."

She watched Anna slide the door open and walk down the hall. Kate was waiting for her. She heard Kate say, "Hi, cutie, I've been waiting for you. Why don't you come to school for lunch Saturday,

PRIVILEGE

and we can go to the movies together. Then you can come back to my room, and we'll have a party with the kids—food from home. A box came today.”

“For Christ’s sakes, who wants to go to a stinkin’ old movie?” said Anna, and she walked away.

The White Sweater

A SHORT STORY BY THERESA OAKES

THE telephone rang in the Syms apartment on East 73rd Street, New York City. The operator said, "Will you take a collect call from Miss Roberta Syms, Old Lyme, Connecticut?"

Mrs. Syms thought, "Third time this week," but she said, "Put her on." It was only a month since Daddy's girl had left for boarding school.

"Lis-sun, Mamma," said Roberta's voice. "You forgot to mail me my white angora sweater."

"It's still at the cleaners, honey. And you can't talk to Daddy . . . Because he's at a Board meeting. Are you studying awfully hard?"

"Uh-huh," said her daughter, her first-born. "When will it come out of the cleaners?"

"Not until the end of the week, dear. Did you get any friendlier with those two nice girls, Betts and Simone, who room next to you?"

"Oh, them!" The scorn in Roberta's voice dismissed them from the conversation.

"Lis-sun, Mamma. Don't forget to mail it . . . the minute it comes from the cleaners."

"I won't. Are you playing tennis, dear?"

"I guess so," said Roberta. Her mind went back to the one subject she seemed able to think about.

"You could send it special delivery . . . because I need it for the tennis party next Thursday, for a very special reason."

"Oh, so you *are* playing tennis."

"I guess so."

THE WHITE SWEATER

"What do you mean . . . you guess so? Either you're playing tennis or you're not playing tennis. . . . Which is it?"

"Oh, don't be a drip, Mother. We've got to play. I mean, it's called 'gym' here. So we've got to play, every single day."

"Well, for heaven's sakes, why didn't you say so, in the first place?"

"How could I say so . . . when sometimes we don't play every day?"

"Roberta Syms . . . you just said . . ."

"Well, sometimes it rains," said Roberta, in the indulgent tone one uses to explain things to a moron, "and some days I feel lazy and just kind uv lean against the tennis court. That's why I need my white sweater."

"I'll send it," said Mrs. Syms, with quiet desperation. It was obvious that this conversation which had begun with the white sweater was going to end there.

"Lis-sun, Mamma. Don't hang up. Because I have something personal to tell you. So I don't care if Daddy isn't around. It's why I need my white sweater. Because it's the only one that looks good on me. Besides, he's seen my blue one."

"Who has?"

"Well, it's a boy here that I like . . ."

"A BOY!" said Mrs. Syms, idiotically, incredulously, joyfully. "You mean . . . a BOY?"

"Only I can't tell you his first name because this telephone is in the dormitory hall and all the girls are listening. But I'll give you a hint about his first name. Lis-sun, Mamma, do you remember the name of the boy who liked Corny Pines at camp, last year?"

Mrs. Syms remembered. Last year, whenever she saw Mrs. Pines, Mrs. Pines went into full detail about the boy who was so crazy mad about her Corny. And Mrs. Syms had to listen with the bitter silence of a woman whose daughter had no triumphs.

"I remember," said Mrs. Syms, wryly. "His name was Pierre."

A chortle of joy came over the wire. It didn't sound like Roberta, at all.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"That's right" (giggle). "Well, take the first letter of that name . . . , the same letter, . . . and then, it's the English word for that same name and it begins with that same first letter."

"Peter!" said Mrs. Syms, triumphantly.

The joy that followed this name gurgled over the wire and spilled its warmth inside of Mrs. Syms. Since Roberta was a baby, she hadn't felt so close to her.

"You guessed right," said the gurgle. "That's just what it is. Now you know his first name. Only I won't tell you his second name because all the girls are listening." Pause. "Wait a minute." Pause. "Miss Harvey wants me to get off the phone because she says it is possible that some other girls might even want to talk to *their* parents . . . but . . . just guess what grade he's in."

"I think you ought to obey Miss Harvey," said Mrs. Syms, but her voice sounded weakly unconvincing, even to herself. She added, almost immediately, "Isn't he a freshman?"

Roberta laughed with delirious enjoyment.

"Keep going up."

"Sophomore?" Her mother had the agreeable feeling that they were both conspiring against Miss Harvey, who was undoubtedly hovering, like a storm cloud about to break.

"Nope. Go higher."

"Roberta, he's not a senior, is he?" A choke and a chortle.

"That's exactly what he is. Only I can't repeat it because all the girls are listening. And, Mamma, do you think he might like me? Even if Alma Smith is crazy about him? I mean, with your experience, you might know. Whether a boy could like another girl, even if a different girl is crazy about him and she has naturally curly red hair? I mean, do you think that naturally curly red hair would make a great deal of difference?"

Mrs. Syms thought of Roberta's straight, lank brown hair . . . which she had always refused to let her mother do anything to . . . of her pudgy figure . . . and her straightforward, honest, brown eyes.

THE WHITE SWEATER

"Well, looks aren't everything," she said. A sigh of relief came over the wire.

"Well, I'm certainly glad you don't think he would like Alma. And I think he might like me. That's why I want the white sweater. Because, at the tennis party, he's going to ask one of the girls to the Senior Dance. That's the tradition at that party. Did I tell you he's in charge of the tennis courts? And, do you know why I'm so hopeful? It's on account of something he did, at the last lesson. Do you know what he did? HE THREW DIRT ON MY SOCKS! Yes, Miss Harvey, I'm getting off. Mamma, did you hear me say he threw dirt on my socks? Well, if you were me, wouldn't you think that was *significant*? Well, Miss Harvey wants me to get off. Could you call me back, so we could discuss this further? No, wait a minute. Well, Miss Harvey says you can't call me back because it is barely possible that there are a few other girls in this dormitory who might enjoy having a few words with their own parents. Wait a minute . . . don't hang up . . . gosh, I thought you hung up . . . don't forget to mail the white sweater . . . gosh, I almost forgot to remind you to mail it. . . ."

Mrs. Syms was limp as she put down the receiver. She thought of the disappointment her child would have a week from Thursday and she almost couldn't bear it. She went back into the living room, sat on a couch and put her head in her hands. The hall door opened, and Mr. Syms came in. She called out,

"Roberta just phoned."

"Gosh . . . and I missed her . . ." he said, contritely. "Did she feel terrible about that?" He hung up his coat and came into the living room.

"I bet she felt terrible," he said.

Mrs. Syms looked at him and knew *he* would feel terrible at the step Roberta had already taken away from him.

"You know how teen-agers are," she said. "She was all steamed up about a white sweater that didn't come back from the cleaners."

"Oh, woman's business!" he said, clearly relieved.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

II

The next Monday night, the telephone rang in the Syms apartment . . . the long, insistent shrill of long distance, charges reversed.

"I'll take it," said Mr. Syms, eagerly. He wrote to Roberta daily, but it was not the same as actually talking to her.

"Don't forget to put me on, afterwards," said Mrs. Syms, looking up from her mending.

He smiled compassionately as he strode into the library where the phone was ringing. Some more about the white sweater, no doubt. What women had to say to each other was always the quintessence of the commonplace. . . . "Mamma, I need some new barrettes" . . . or . . . "socks; I'm absolutely threadbare" . . . or . . . "a new slip; I tore my old one."

Roberta and he had intellectual interests in common, but the white sweater . . . or its equivalent . . . was the only topic of conversation with her mother. He picked up the phone.

Tonight, however, the intellectual interests didn't take long. In a few moments, he was back in the living room. He looked puzzled.

"I don't know what's the matter with her. She sounds different. She only seems to want to talk to you."

"Daddy's girl!" thought Mrs. Syms exultantly, as she ran for the phone. She closed the library door, carefully.

"Lis-sun, Mamma." Roberta's voice was hoarse with excitement. "Thanks for sending me that check. It was certainly wonderful of you to see that I might need a permanent before Thursday. Because Betts and Simone both think the situation is quite desperate."

"Betts and Simone?" said Mrs. Syms, weakly.

"You know, the girls who room next door. They seem to have taken quite an interest in me. Because, when your check came, I told them what it was for. And how desperate I felt about a certain character. And Simone said I had a very understanding mother. Because you see clearly that a girl can't ensnare a man with intellect alone

THE WHITE SWEATER

. . . she's got to appeal to his lower, more animal nature. So they're both taking me down to the village tomorrow to get that permanent."

"Well, that is nice."

"They're really wonderful. They said they thought I was a fancy kind of a drip because I was always studying. And they had heard that I was a genius or something. But now they can see that I'm just a girl who doesn't know how to do anything with myself. And they're going to help me." •

"Like how?" asked Mrs. Syms, cautiously.

"Like telling me how to behave with a certain character on Thursday. Because how you look at a boy is supposed to be different from how you look at a real human being, for instance. And Betts is going to put some lipstick on me."

"Tell her not to put on too much."

"I will. I'll call you up on Thursday night. Oh, Mamma, if he does invite me to the dance, I think I'll die of happiness."

III

Mrs. Syms got through Thursday somehow. Thursday night came, and Roberta did not phone; so she knew that the worst had happened. Of course, Peter had not asked her. Her first love had been ridiculed and trampled on. The danger was that she might be so hurt that she would never dare to expose her heart again. All over the world one could find women, single, unwedded, barren . . . who had remained "Daddy's girl" until it was too late.

Mrs. Syms bore the agony of uncertainty until Friday night. When the phone did not ring, after dinner, she stole upstairs into her bedroom and put in a call to Old Lyme, Connecticut, over the extension.

Roberta's voice sounded as if she were dead.

"He didn't even notice the permanent. I might as well have left off the lipstick. And I didn't get near enough to him to look at him. He asked Alma Smith to the dance."

AMERICAN VANGUARD

Mrs. Syms felt like crying.

"I don't know how I'm going to live through the rest of the term. It seems that I talked too much. And now everybody knows how crazy I am about him. They'll all make fun of me."

"I don't think they will," said Mrs. Syms.

"Everybody except Betts and Simone. They asked me to room with them. Because, when I cried, right in front of them on Thursday night, Simone said I was behaving just like *Forever Amber* in an agony of grief. Isn't that funny?" ,

"Not very," said Mrs. Syms.

"I mean funny-peculiar; not funny-ha-ha. Because just when I expected that she would make fun of me because I was crying like a baby, she liked me more."

"It's a feeling women have for each other," said Mrs. Syms.

"I've never felt like a woman before," said Roberta, "so I wouldn't know." Her voice sounded better. But Mrs. Syms, as she put down the phone, threw herself across her bed and cried. Because she remembered the wonderful and painful renaissance that bursts into adolescence and releases the young from the icy confines of the mind. Because her daughter, in the agony of being rejected by a man . . . and the wonder of being accepted by other women . . . had become a woman herself. You must live through this twice in your lifetime . . . with yourself . . . with your daughter.

IV

It was a week later that the insistent peal of long distance, charges reversed, again sounded in the Syms apartment.

"I'll take it," said Mr. Syms, happily. "In her last letter, she said she wanted to have a good, long talk with me about the Greek philosophers. She admires Aristotle but . . ."

But his wife was already in the library, at the phone. He followed her and stood over her shoulder, as she listened.

"Lis-sun, Mamma. Lis-sun. I'm mailing you back the white

THE WHITE SWEATER

sweater. Send it right to the cleaners. Because I got invited to the freshman dance.”

“Peter?” asked Mrs. Syms, in a voice tremulous with hope.

“Peter? Heavens, no. I haven’t thought about him in ages . . . well, since the day before yesterday . . . and, anyway, he never really knew I was alive. And all the time, Betts was telling me that Jimmy Runkle couldn’t keep his eyes off me, all through that tennis party. And, since the party he’s been staring at me, in math class.”

“Jimmy Runkle! You’ve never even mentioned him!”

“Never mentioned him! Good gracious, I’ve been raving about Jimmy Runkle ever since I got to school. He’s just the most popular boy in our freshman class . . . that’s all he is! And he asked me in the funniest way. Because I was running down the hall. And he was coming out of geology. And I bumped into him. And he said, “Hello, stupid.” So I said, “Hello, moron.” And then he walked with me, and I looked at him in the way that Betts and Simone showed me. And pretty soon, he said to me . . . Yes, Miss Harvey, I’m getting off this phone. Honestly, I’m getting off . . . this very minute. . . .”

Mrs. Syms put down the receiver.

“Your face looks like a cat lapping up cream,” said Mr. Syms, clearly aggrieved at being left out. “What was it about?”

Mrs. Syms laughed happily.

“The white sweater. She needs it for the freshman dance.”

“Why didn’t you let me talk to her?”

“Oh, this was woman’s business,” she said.

The Scarf

A SHORT STORY BY THOMAS A. DARDIS

THE reflected glare of the snow on the ceiling of the room had awakened him. He came awake slowly, his mind focusing gradually on the dancing pattern of white above his head. Turning his head to the window, he became aware of the blindingly blue color of the sky outside. Far away car chains rattled and thumped on the snowy bricks. Thoughts of snow filled him with a desire to get up and get dressed as quickly as possible. At the same time he was conscious of something that didn't care about the snow, something that warned him to remain in bed. Drowsily, unsuccessfully, he tried to pull the feeling into the room, before his eyes. He was just on the verge of falling asleep again when he heard his mother's voice from the kitchen.

Crossing the room slowly, he finally reached the window. The snow had fallen during most of the night, and now the ground was covered with nearly six inches of it. Although it had stopped falling hours ago, clouds of snow still whirled high and swirled in eddies along the street. He looked at the smooth expanse of whiteness that stretched as far as the eye could reach. Not a sign of life disturbed the scene: the smoothness was still unbroken. Snow was a thing to be savored in isolation. People walked on it, it melted and got dirty: that was wrong, he knew. Leaving the window, he thought the room seemed grey and lonely after the whiteness outside. Crossing the carpet, he looked into the dim mirror near his bed. Johnny Devers stared back at himself, his eyes large and worried looking. As he stared at his reflection, he suddenly remembered why he had been reluctant to get up out of bed. Yesterday, that was it. He struggled with the thought, but it wasn't any use. He had done something wrong, even if he didn't quite see why. It was all very simple, really,

THE SCARF

but he knew that he hadn't reached the end of it yet. His features in the mirror stared back at him, uncomprehendingly. He had just made up his mind to go out when his mother's voice disturbed his reverie.

II

She was standing there in the kitchen with a dish towel in her hand. He kissed her down-turned cheek, enjoying the smoothness of it on his lips. She looked at him smilingly and then frowned.

"Your pajamas need mending again. You'll have to wear the other ones tonight. Why, you've ripped nearly the whole arm off them, Johnny."

"I got them caught on the door. I'm sorry, Mother." He smiled winningly. Her frown faded; she had to smile—that he knew. She kissed him again.

"That's all right. But you will take care of your things in the future, won't you?"

He nodded his head and walked over to the window. As his mother began breakfast, he stared out into the bright morning. The snow looked different from here. It seemed less smooth than it had from the bedroom. The kitchen looked out on the front side of the building, where great trucks and scrapers had already started to remove the snow. He could hear the persistent metallic clanging of a snow shovel on the pavement. Gradually, far off, he heard his mother speaking to him again. He tried to listen, to pay attention. While someone else was in the room, his mother chatted on and on. There was almost never a need to reply, but if she asked you a question and realized you hadn't been listening, she was dreadfully hurt.

"You haven't heard a word I've said, have you?"

"I'm sorry, Mother. Say, can I go out right after I eat?"

"To go around sniffing for a month, I suppose."

"No, I won't get wet. I'll wear my overshoes."

"All right, then you can go out. But to get back to what I was saying,—or didn't you hear a word of it?"

AMERICAN VANGUARD

He realized then that he must have begun to hear her, but had stopped, had allowed himself to be distracted. Squirming uncomfortably in his chair, he looked up at her with a frightened expression on his face. She stopped her work at the stove and came over to put her arms around him.

"Remember what you promised your father? If you see any of those kids today, what are you going to do?"

The thought filled his stomach with a wild fear that he felt must show in his face. Why had it all started? He had gone out yesterday afternoon, wearing his new red muffler that he had got for Christmas. Though he knew some of the kids, most of them were strangers to him. One of them started to taunt him about the red muffler. Who cared? It was too much trouble having friends. But then the biggest one wrenched the muffler from his neck. The grinning faces revolved before him, the jeering rang in his ears. What was he going to do? Why, run home, of course, where they didn't do that to you. So he ran home.

His father was a tall man who spoke very correctly and had blue eyes that shone brightly behind his glasses. Johnny and his father never had much to say to one another. That evening Mr. Devers had taken his usual place by the radio in the front room. Johnny had heard the radio being snapped off and then a moment's silence.

"Johnny."

"Yes, Father."

"Your mother tells me that you let someone take away that muffler she gave you for Christmas. Is that true, Johnny?"

"Yes, Father."

"You think that was very manly, Johnny?"

"No, Father."

"Well, next time you meet that fellow, you get it back. Do you understand, Johnny?"

"Yes, Father, but he . . ."

"But he what, Johnny?"

"He always goes around with a gang of other fellows, Father."

"That doesn't make any difference. The most important thing,

THE SCARF

Johnny, is this: never run away from anything. You should have stayed and fought it out. Do you know what they call what you did this afternoon, Johnny?"

"No, Father."

"They call it being a coward, Johnny."

That was how it had been last night when he had talked to his father. He would have to do something about it, all right. He thought of staying in the house, but that wouldn't do any good. His mother was speaking again, and he looked at her.

"All right, Mother. I promise."

"That's good, Johnny. You'll see that your father is right." She looked at him sadly in the quiet, empty kitchen.

III

When he left the apartment, he descended the darkened stairway and stood for a moment in the lower hallway. A car passed in the street outside, its chains making a clinking sound that died away as he listened to it. Opening the door, he looked outside. Nobody. Just as he was about to descend the steps to the sidewalk, he heard them. He stood there for a moment, indecisive, until he heard the shout again. Panic-stricken, he turned back to the house and re-entered the building. Had they seen him? Perhaps they were shouting at someone else. He stood by the door, peering out, not knowing which way to turn. He *couldn't* go back to the apartment. He listened intently. Nothing, except the banging noise of the shovel on the pavement outside. Perhaps they hadn't seen him. He would wait a moment and then go outside again.

He crossed the lobby and opened one of the windows that looked out at the back of the building. The ledge of the window was covered with several inches of snow. He scooped up several handfuls and crushed them with his hands. The faint noise of steam escaping from one of the radiators gave him an idea. Taking the crushed handful of snow, he applied it to the hot steel of the radiator. A billowing cloud of steam arose from the metal, and water ran down

AMERICAN VANGUARD

the floor. This was fun! He had just come back with a second handful when he heard the front door opening. Nervously, he dropped the wet stuff on the floor.

"Why, Johnny Devers, you silly thing, do you still melt snow on radiators? I haven't done that in years."

It was Christine Adams, the girl from the apartment upstairs on the fourth floor. She was about two years older than Johnny, and was already in the first year of high school. Johnny had always liked Christine, but she almost never spoke to him. She was a very pretty girl with long blond hair that fell to her shoulders. She had just started to use make-up, and her red lips glistened as she spoke to him. Looking at her gave Johnny a funny feeling that he couldn't understand. She was smiling at him, and he smiled back at her.

"I just didn't feel like going out, so I started to do this," he said, holding up his wet hands.

"That's not much fun. Let's go out for a walk, Johnny. You don't want to miss the snow, do you?"

He felt speechless. She had not only spoken to him; she had asked him to go out walking with her. He could scarcely believe it.

"You mean—you mean you want to go out for a walk with me, Christine?"

"Silly, who else do you think I mean? You're the only one here, aren't you?"

He nodded sheepishly, his face reddening. She laughed at him again, and he noticed the whiteness of her teeth against the red of her lips.

"Sure, Christine, I'll be glad to go out with you," he said, hoping she wouldn't notice his burning face.

IV

As they crossed the lobby, he felt better than he had in a long time. He opened the door for her, and they descended to the pavement. They started up the street, and he felt very strange to be here walking with Christine. Being with her gave him a warm comfort-

THE SCARF

able feeling that made him forget his worries of the early morning. They were about halfway to the delivery entrance when he heard the familiar shout. There were about eight of them running toward him. Turning to escape, he felt himself suddenly held from behind. Even before he looked, he knew it was Christine. He realized all at once that she had known that they were out here waiting for him. Swinging around, he saw her gleeful smile. With abrupt swiftness he threw off her grip and ran back up the street. He reached the door just in time and closed it behind him. As fast as he could he ran upstairs, until he reached his own landing. He pressed his finger against the bell and kept it there. When his mother opened the door, he pushed past her without saying a word.

Now, in his own room, with the door closed behind him, he lay on his bed, panting. Soon she would come in and it would begin all over again. The face of Christine came back to him then, savage and joyous as she had held him.

He heard his mother's approaching footsteps and buried his face in the pillow. He heard the door being opened and the sounds she made as she crossed the room. He could feel her looking down at him, and he opened his eyes slowly.

"You didn't get it, did you, Johnny?"

"No," he said slowly, holding on tightly to the pillow. "No, I didn't get it, Mother," his voice hollow and low in the quiet bedroom.

The Man of the Family

A SHORT STORY BY JACK BOXER

EVERY Saturday morning, last summer, Mom drove up for the week-end to visit my kid brother at Camp Menimynamo. She wanted me to come along, too, but I had enough of the brat all year long. He's all right, I guess, but just because I was going on twelve, and his older brother, Mom always wanted me to be an example for him.

Well, gee whiz, how could a guy have had any fun? It has been only since Dad died last year that I've made any real friends. He'd never let me out in the evenings at all. But things aren't perfect now, either. To show you what I mean—maybe I'd be out late with the gang, and just couldn't get home before eleven—twelve o'clock; well, holy cats, you know how some mothers are! Since Dad's death, she always says I have to be the man of the family. You can't be much of a man on a three-buck-a-week allowance, can you? She'd say, "Tom, dear, don't you think you should consider your mother? You know Mother can't sleep unless she knows her boys are safe and sound in their beds. Even little Billy cried and didn't want to go to sleep without you."

I'd know what was coming next. "After all, you're the man of the family now, and must set an example for him."

See what I mean? Holy mackerel! Well, that's why I didn't want to take that long ride up to the Adirondacks. I might have gone along if she'd only teach me to drive. But she'd always say, "You're much too young. Wait until you're a bit older." Can you tie that!

Anyway, we'd have loads of fun when she left. I'd get the gang together, and we'd have a party at my house. The gang knew no one was allowed to leave until they had cleaned up so that the house

THE MAN OF THE FAMILY

would look exactly the way Mom left it. That's why she never found out about the parties.

I'll always remember the last party we had the week before my birthday. When Mom left, she made me promise to study for my confirmation. "Sure, Mom," I promised, "I'll study." And I did, too, until the gang came over. Boy, were we going to have fun! Only this time, including myself, there were eight of us. Three of the fellers came with girls. Well, gee whiz—how did I know? There they were; I couldn't tell them to go home. Anyway, I didn't want to. Especially Tina. I liked her best, even if she was pretty old. Dick brought her. He said she was a Lincoln High soph, in one of his classes, so she must have been at least his age. He was fifteen. I made the fellers promise not to tell the girls my real age. When I went out to buy more ice cream and soda for them, I also bought a pack of Camels.

II

When I returned, the gang had put a record on the phonograph, and Dick and Tina were dancing. I didn't know Dick could dance. None of the other fellers could. They were just sitting around watching Dick and Tina. The song ended, and Dick went to change records. Tina came up to me and asked, "May I help you serve?"

She followed me into the kitchen. I just couldn't talk. She was so pretty. I liked being alone in the kitchen with her. She wore a white, woolly-looking sweater, and a pale blue skirt that reached to her bare knees. No stockings, just anklets and saddle shoes. Only to look at her made me feel good. I like blond hair, especially platinum. I hoped she wasn't Dick's steady girl friend. She said, "Is this lovely house yours?"

"I live here," I told her, "but I guess the house really belongs to my mother."

"It must be wonderful to live in a beautiful home of your own." She was slicing the ice cream very carefully, and placing each equal portion on a plate beside a paper napkin.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"I don't know. It's just a house. I've always lived here." I could not understand why anyone should like a common old house so much, but I was glad she liked mine. I wanted her to like everything about me. Holy cow, just talking to her made me feel strong and grown up. I wanted to protect her. I wanted her to be in danger, so I could save her. I wanted to show her how brave I was. I wanted—I wanted, very much, for her to like me. Gee, I wanted so many things I can't explain.

By the time she finished slicing the ice cream, I had filled the glasses with soda pop, so we carried the refreshments into the living room. After everyone ate the ice cream, Dick started to play another record, but Harry stopped him. "Let's play games," he said. One of the girls, her name is Alice, said, "Not kissing games. That's kid stuff."

Dick said, "Oh, lady, be good," and the girls laughed. I don't know why they laughed. That's just the name of a song.

Anyway, we decided to play post office, and one of the girls went out first. She had a letter for Dick. It was a pretty long letter, too. Then Dick called Tina, but this one was short, and Dick came out looking mad, but trying not to show it. I was hoping Tina would have at least a post card for me. I said to myself, I'll hold my breath and if she calls a name before I have to let go, it'll be me. . . . And I did, . . . and it was me. She said, "I have a nice long letter for Tom." Gee, that's what she said. And I was glad, but I was scared a little, too.

III

I went into the bedroom and then stood there looking at her. I didn't know what to do. I thought of my Camels. I remembered just in time to offer her one first. I guess she doesn't smoke, because she refused it, and I don't think she liked men to smoke, either. She said, "Isn't it too stuffy in here to smoke?" Someone had pulled down the blinds, and it was kind of warm in there.

"Yeah," I said, "it sure is." I didn't light my cigarette.

THE MAN OF THE FAMILY

Then she said, "Well, don't you want to kiss me?" Boy, oh boy, that's just what she said! She was sitting on the bed, and so I sat down next to her. I did and I didn't. I wanted to kiss her, but I didn't want her to think I was too fresh. She said, "Don't you like me at all?"

Holy cow! Sure I liked her. I said, "You're the most attractive girl I've ever met." Dick always said you've got to be smooth with women. I hoped I was being smooth. I put my arm around her, and she put her arms around me. And then I must've pushed her or something, because she lost her balance and fell back on the bed. We kissed. Honest, I liked kissing her. I used to hate it when Mom told me to kiss Aunt Sally when she used to visit us. But this wasn't like kissing Aunt Sally at all. It was more—it was different. Yeah, it was altogether different. It made me feel funny all over inside. I wanted something to happen, and I felt like kissing her again; but she was lying with her face turned away from me. Then, with my arm under her back, she turned over on her stomach, and my hand was pressing her breast. I pulled my hand away fast. I hoped she didn't notice, but I guess she did, because she got up from the bed. It was an accident. I didn't mean to touch her there. I was trying to think of an apology, when Dick opened the door without even knocking and came into the room.

IV

For a couple of seconds he just looked at us. "We thought you two had fallen asleep in here." He spoke as if he were mad about something. "The gang sent me after you."

Tina said, "I was just leaving. We had quite a chat. In fact, that's all your boy friend does: just talk."

Dick's expression changed; he looked happy. Then he broke his word, for which I'll never talk to him again. He said, "Why don't you pick on someone your size? The kid's not yet twelve."

I don't remember what happened after that. I felt so ashamed, I wished I could just disappear. Gee, and he was supposed to be my

AMERICAN VANGUARD

friend! I guess I'll never trust anyone again as long as I live. I went into the bathroom and locked the door and just wouldn't come out. Pretty soon I heard everyone leaving, and so I peeked out the window and saw Tina in the street laughing at something Dick was saying. She held Dick's arm and looked up at him, laughing.

I felt so miserable, I almost cried. I wished Mom were home. I told myself I'd never let her visit Billy without me again. I wandered through the empty house, putting things in place, feeling more and more lonely. I wished I could do something to show Mom how much I really loved her, and then I remembered my promise to study for my confirmation. I took out my speech from the desk and started to read aloud from the page.

"Mother dear, ladies and gentlemen: Today I am a man. . . ."

A Rose for Maman

A SHORT STORY BY MILTON WEINSTEIN

THE PROCESSION of motor cars crept down the Auvergne country road, the black catafalque ahead setting a stately pace. Lines of heavy-leaved elms shut out the sun, turning the roadway into a gloomy arcade. Drifting through the sultry June air, faint echoes of tolling bells from the little village of Borlezieux far behind mingled with the mournful drone of tires on warm tar.

Fourteen-year-old Marc Baumann rode in the large black touring car, huddled between Rabbi Levin and massive Aunt Belle. He sat tense, pressed against the man, thus leaving a small space between himself and the woman. As the cortege pressed on, brief shafts of sunlight, finding holes in the leafy curtain overhead, splashed its warmth on the faces of aunt and nephew. The sun was unkind to her. Sandpaper skin, embittered lips, forbidding brows over cold, imperious eyes all bespoke the woman who had carved her own secure place in the world—alone. Passing on to Marc, the golden shafts laid bare a sensitive, pallid face dominated by liquid brown eyes and full lips.

II

At this moment, however, his eyes were focused on another day and another scene; the time was yesterday, the place, *Tante Belle's* parlor. Then, too, it was late afternoon and then, too, he had sat stiffly next to his aunt. The terrace doors were closed, the curtains drawn, and Marc felt the gloom as something palpable and oppressive. A single candle, burning evenly in the still air, threw a faint amber tint over his mother's translucent face as she lay at rest.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

It was then he knew, suddenly, what was wrong. Shifting his glance from the coffin, he whispered: "*Tante Belle?*"

"Yes?" she asked, turning to him.

"It's wrong—terribly wrong. Something is missing."

The woman looked slowly about the room as if she were taking inventory and finally turned back to Marc.

"Everything is as it should be. Sit quietly," she frowned.

"But no, *Tante*. It is all wrong," he timidly persisted. "Maman loved the flowers on the terrace," he went on, "yet the doors are closed—and it is so dark in here, and—and there's not a single flower in the room. She loved them. There should be flowers . . ."

"Flowers," she snorted, angry now. "Marc, only a year ago were you confirmed. Tomorrow at the cemetery you will read the mourner's *Kaddish*. You know our faith forbids flowers at a death. Please have the decency to be still now."

Marc made one last attempt: "But *Maman* loved flowers, and surely—surely . . ."

Aunt Belle had turned away without bothering to reply. Tears welled up in Marc's eyes.

III

Now the cortege came out on a sunny stretch. In the fields he saw the ripening grapevines; his nostrils flared to the winelike pungency in the air. The scent carried him back into yesterday, and he lived again those last hours with his mother.

After breakfast he had guided her in her wheelchair on to the terrace to sit amid the colorful blobs and mingled scents of her beloved flowers. As was his custom, he had spread a blanket over the grass and had sat at her feet.

"See how the yellow rosebuds sparkle in the morning dew, eh, Marc?" she had said. "Such warmth . . . such peace," she had sighed.

Then she was quiet. It seemed to the boy that her heart was reach-

A ROSE FOR MAMAN

ing out to encompass within her fragile frame some of this warmth. But presently she spoke again, more seriously:

"Marc, *Tante Belle* has been so wonderful to us. I have news for you this morning—good news."

He looked up, and his face wore the frown which by now appeared automatically at every mention of his aunt's name.

"*Tante Belle* has had word from Paris. You have been accepted in L'Ecole Parleantin for next September. There you will be able to prepare yourself for the Sorbonne," she went on.

"But—"

"You must remember to thank *Tante Belle* properly, Marc."

"But, *Maman*," he pleaded, "I can't go. I don't want to leave you, ever . . ."

Instinctively she reached out her hand to stroke his wavy black hair. She let it fall instead to the wheel of her chair, gripping the smooth wood tightly. She said:

"*Tante Belle* is right. You are still a little boy tied to my apron strings. Just think," she continued, forcing a brighter note into her weary voice, "in a few years you will be a doctor. Won't it mean something to you to go among the sick and make them well? How proud of you I shall be. Is this not worth the few years? . . ."

Tante Belle, the boy cried to himself, always it is *Tante Belle*. But after a moment he raised his glance.

"Yes," he said. "*Tante Belle* is right, *Maman*."

Then they sat quietly in the green stillness. Presently *Maman's* pellucid lids closed over her watery, pale eyes, and her breast rose and fell to the rhythm of her tranquil breathing as she slept. Marc, too, unable to dwell longer on September, sought refuge in sleep.

IV

He was shocked back into consciousness. He blinked his eyes in the bright sun and then was aware of Aunt Belle's hand pummeling

his shoulder and her harsh voice grating in his ear. "Get up. Get up, you stupid boy."

He sat up abruptly. A queerness in his aunt's face, even a slight tenderness he had never seen before, frightened him. He looked at his mother and noted that his aunt's voice had not disturbed her repose. Then he saw that her breast rose and fell no longer . . .

V

Now at last, as the slanting rays of the setting sun made elongated shadows of the gravestones, the cortege arrived at the cemetery. Another hazy interlude, and Marc found himself standing at one end of the open grave next to Rabbi Levin, listening as he intoned the service in a sonorous, unfamiliar Hebrew. Opposite him stood Aunt Belle and with her, and along one side, were grouped the dark figures of other mourners. A mound of damp, freshly dug loam bordered the other side.

The solemn voice ceased. Marc felt a book thrust into his hands and heard the rabbi whisper, "Read the *Kaddish* now, Marc."

Haltingly he started to read the Hebrew words: "*Yisgadāl v'yiskadash*—My parent, my kindest friend, whom God has appointed to love and protect me, reposes in this silent grave . . ."

Now that he was finished, Rabbi Levin was taking the prayer book from his hands, whispering again: "Now take up a handful of earth, Marc, and drop it in the grave."

Marc drew himself up stiffly. His eyes moved from Rabbi Levin's compassionate face, swept slowly down the group of mourners, and came to rest on the still dry eyes of his aunt. He held her eyes in a gaze unbelligerent, yet strangely forceful, while he drew from his pocket a small yellow rosebud. Still looking at *Tante Belle*, he raised the bud to his lips.

Then he lowered his gaze to the darkening grave. Tenderly he dropped the bud on *Maman's* casket.

The Wake

A SHORT STORY BY KENNETH HENRY

DON'T worry about anything, Julie," Alec said. He fingered the gold watch chain dangling down over his black silk vest. "We can depend on your judgment and taste, Alec," Claire assured him. "When Mother died, you made her wake the talk of the neighborhood. I could have sworn she was breathing the way you fixed her." She looked morosely at Julie. "The same as you'd fix us."

"Claire!" Julie exclaimed. "Stop being so morbid! Father's dead . . ." Claire shuddered at the word *dead*. She reproached her sister with a glance. "But he has lived a full life," Julie continued, ignoring the appeal in her sister's eyes. "At eighty-six . . ."

Alec glanced a second time at his watch.

"That's the most philosophical attitude," he interrupted. He wanted to leave in order to complete the arrangements for the funeral. There was always so much to do, and to his cares as undertaker was added the responsibility of being a relative. He must produce an unusual effect. "A little rouge on the old man's upper cheek," he thought. "Yes, he'll look quite fresh—like he'd been drinking again."

"Bless you," he said to the sisters, then crossed himself before taking his black silk hat from Julie's hand. . . .

By three o'clock Grandfather lay in the Sunday parlor, banked in white lilies and roses, which gleamed in the candlelight. The shades were drawn in the room Grandfather had loved, though he used to sit in it only on special occasions—like Christmas, when the smell of pine filled the room and it rang with children's laughter; when Aunt Mary came in from Canton, in the spring, with homemade piccalilli; at weddings, and at other times of celebration or piety;

and when the family dead lay in shadow under the black marble mantelpiece where the mahogany clock ticked on, incongruously loud. It was a room designed for solemnity and ritual, a place that would make both George and Denise uncomfortable; but his grandson and the girl who had sat by him all night in his last moments of pain—getting him water and pressing his forehead with her cool palms—were the people he loved most, the ones he would most want to be there, although neither of them belonged, any more than he had until this hour in which his family could reclaim him.

George was the first one to look into the parlor, but he didn't dare go in alone. He'd never seen anyone dead before, and he was frightened. He decided to wait for Denise, whom he heard upstairs, brushing her teeth and getting dressed.

George never knew what to do with his hands or how his changing voice was going to sound. Generally people laughed at him when he spoke, everyone except Denise. George liked her better than either of his aunts; Julie and Claire were so exacting, and they never laughed. Besides, in a way, he and Denise were both social outcasts. He went to Sunday school at the Congregational Church, which Aunt Julie insisted did "nothing but bake chicken pie for church suppers, and that inexpertly." "It's not George's fault," she used to say. "But his mother . . . well!" Julie disliked his mother, Ruth, almost as much as she did Denise, a servant, who pretended to be Grandfather's daughter, who walked to St. Ambrose's to mass every morning at six with Grandfather, when he felt strong enough to go. Julie was sorry she had ever taken the girl in. . . .

George, still standing in the parlor doorway, heard Denise's footsteps on the carpeted stairs. He looked up and saw her coming down. More than ever he loved her; and now her face was a startling white framed by her black hair and her black mourning dress with its high Russian collar. She coiled her rosary tightly in one hand. Her eyes shone. "George," she whispered, "they're all in the kitchen?"

"Yes," he whispered back. "Will you go in with me?" He pointed vaguely toward his grandfather.

She seized his hand and took him into the parlor. Immediately she

THE WAKE

kneeled down, crossed herself, and began chanting her Hail Marys. George fumbled with his hands and stood staring with a combination of horror and morbid fascination at his grandfather. He looked again. The lips were sewed! He could see two stitches; it somehow unnerved him. They sewed a dead man's lips! There was something inhuman about it. He looked, but he wanted to hide his eyes and escape from the room. He could see Uncle Alec with a needle and thread sewing the lips, then taking out his gold watch to look at the time. . . . The smell of ferns, of the burning wax—he could hear the quiet licking of the candle flames above Denise's mumbled prayers—and of the roses and the dreadful oval blossoms of calla lilies, with their pistils swaying in the center of the wax-white blossoms, made him feel sick. He nearly knocked over the horseshoe fashioned of red roses, which leaned against the bier. He read the gilt letters embroidered on the purple streamer attached to the horseshoe: "Love in memory of Father."

"Denise, I'm sick," he said, and turned to leave the parlor.

Claire and Julie stood in the doorway.

"We haven't been in ourselves," Claire said, "and there's Denise already praying—not even one of the family!" She made no effort to keep Denise from hearing.

George stumbled past his aunts.

"The boy is sick!" Denise informed them, then followed him upstairs without looking at the sisters.

"First an old man," Julie whispered to Claire, "and now she's chasing a boy of fifteen! . . . in a house where the dead lie."

Claire gave a slight lurch at the sound of the word *dead*. Why did Julie keep saying it?—it was like an invocation of evil. It was indecent.

"Please don't say . . . *dead*," she begged, shuddering at the word.

"Well, Father is dead," Julie said. "The fact remains, no matter how you put it."

"Yes . . . but for the sake of . . ." Claire pleaded.

"All right, dear," Julie said. "You watch Father. . . . I'll finish

AMERICAN VANGUARD

helping George's mother with the cake; she can't be trusted alone with frosting. She never could."

II

George was sick. Denise steadied him, gave him some antiseptic to rinse his mouth out with, then took him into her room, which was in the back of the house; it had a low slanting ceiling and one dormer window.

"Don't tell Mother, Denise," George said feebly, while she drew the extra blanket up over his thin body. "She'd only laugh, like it was a joke."

Denise knew she could soothe him by talking to him like a man: this was her secret, to treat boys like men and men like boys. She sat down on the edge of the bed, leaned toward George's head on the pillow, and threw one arm across his chest. She laid her head beside his and talked softly into his ear. He felt the warmth of her cheek as it brushed against his, and he could smell the fresh cologne. He felt her breath on his ear and could feel her body breathing. George gave in to sleepy happiness; he barely heard Denise's words, which filtered gradually down through layers of his consciousness like the sounds of a radio playing far off in another room. Her words were one of many fused sensations: the cologne, the pillow, soft, rising up, up around his ears and muffling him, and his endless sinking into a confused dream.

"I was terrified," Denise said. "Death used to make me sick, too. And there he was, dead on the floor."

The image of someone dead dissolved George's childhood dream; for a moment he listened attentively. He could understand the dead now; and death couldn't ever make him sick again, he resolved, ever. He clenched his thin fists in a promise.

"They thought I did it. The gendarmes would come and take me away. I was not the one they wanted. They knew and I knew. And they knew I would know . . . the records at the *mairie* leave very little out."

THE WAKE

George was slipping back into his dream. The sound of Denise's slight French accent made him drowsy and comfortable. He had perked up at the sound of "death"; now its insidious soundlessness, its silent drama, stole unseen among his dreams.

Denise kept on talking gently: "What if your Aunt Claire did . . . what if? Sure, I was a manicurist on the boat from le Havre, getting away before they guessed, afraid to get off the ship except in New York. And if it hadn't been Albert, then Valery. . . . That is the flow of things, George. The what next of living the way I lived. And now again it is what next? I wouldn't have stayed so long. But the old man was so sweet." He looked so new.

She watched George breathing deeply, almost asleep.

"The newness of him!"

She leaned over and kissed him, more like a girl than a woman of thirty-eight. He stirred uneasily in his sleep, as if some secret mystery had touched him.

In a dream, George's grandfather came to life again. George saw him presiding at the end of the Sunday dinner table, a large dinner napkin tucked into his button collar. "Father's such a slob about eating," Julie always said. Grandfather never looked happier than when gnawing on the drumstick, sucking its sweet juice. He winked at George. "It needs only a mite of beer to make it perfect," he said. Claire glanced significantly at Julie, but said nothing.

Then George knew it was going to happen, as it always did—he knew Claire and Julie were expecting it to, and almost willfully he did it. He knocked over his glass of water. It spilled into his plate, down over the white damask tablecloth, and on to his best Sunday suit. He looked helplessly at his grandfather. "Such a clumsy child," Julie said.

George's grandfather took the soiled dinner napkin from under his chin and handed it to his grandson. George dabbed his wet pants with Grandfather's napkin. The old man said nothing at first, then, "Claire, you did a mighty good job on this chicken today."

George was awakened from the dream by the sound of footsteps entering the room. . . .

"Denise!" Claire stood in the doorway patting powder under her arms.

"He was sick," Denise said, shrugging her shoulders. A sudden callousness possessed her. It had come before, and she knew it meant she was ready to move on. She no longer cared what she said to Claire: "Looking at the old man made him sick," Denise said. "It sometimes does that to people when they care a lot."

Claire was speechless. She stopped dusting her arms with talcum. Particles of it filled the air like dust. Denise sneezed. "That cheap stuff you use," she said, provoking the crisis.

"Denise," Claire said, trembling with anger, "Julie and I have been discussing it. We appreciate the care you gave Father. It was very kind—but we really can't afford to keep . . . we could let the room for at least five dollars. You know you are still here without papers. We . . ."

"Yes, Claire," Denise said. She was tired of playing a game. "I'm going. Tonight."

"I knew you'd understand," Claire rattled on. "The family wouldn't understand you coming to the funeral—they might think—anything. You know people." She laughed nervously.

"Don't get yourself upset," Denise said. "I keep my word. I'll be gone before O'Flaherty comes in drunk to pay his last respects to Father."

Claire squirmed. She resented the word *Father* from Denise's lips; and she was always upset at the thought of Father's favorite crony, Mr. O'Flaherty. She hoped he wouldn't make a scene; she hoped this as fervently as she hoped Denise would be gone before Aunt Margaret and all the others came.

Denise had left the room so swiftly, Claire hadn't even seen her go.

III

In that semiconscious state which divides sleep from waking, George heard Denise in the next room pulling luggage from the

THE WAKE

storage closet. He missed the significance of the haste, the finality in the sounds she made, the clicking of the locks, the noise of boxes falling, the soft shuffle of woolen things, the clattering of shoes. Suddenly a thud came from outside near the front porch. A man's groan, then a curse, followed by, "May the Lord've mercy on my own soul, or I'll be in there in the coffin with you yet, Jerry!"

Denise came running in to look out of the window.

"It's O'Flaherty," she said. "Drunk as a lord, too!"

George sat up in bed and looked out the window with her. Mr. O'Flaherty, still righting himself unsteadily, seemed none the worse for tripping on a circle of garden hose. He was about to totter over for a second time when a man—"about the same age as Denise," George thought—ran up to him and caught him by both elbows.

"Can y'make it?" he asked.

Denise raised the window and called out, "Charlie!"

The man looked up and grinned. "I got the note!" he called back, lowering his voice to suit a house in mourning.

George studied Denise with pangs of jealousy; he resented the sudden energy which shook her shoulders, which made her walk lightly toward him, laughing into his eyes: "Your aunts don't need me now—there aren't any more sheets to wash. . . . That's Charlie who called. He's got papers for me to cross the border with him into Canada. Friends there he used to do business with before prohibition was . . ."

George didn't know what to say. He tried to formulate what rushed into his mind, something about loyalties. How could Denise forget so quickly saying her Hail Marys downstairs where she had kneeled before Grandfather? She had said she loved *him*, too. How long did her love last? How could she laugh?—he was sick, still in bed, with a sense of unsteadiness in his legs and brain—laugh at him? She had held his head and talked him to sleep so tenderly!

Denise noticed the look in George's eyes.

"Oh, my little, little boy!" she exclaimed, and patting him on both cheeks, pulled his head down on to her bosom. "But you will grow up to understand—and if you are a great man like your grand-

AMERICAN VANGUARD

father, to forgive. . . . George, I won't see you later, so I better kiss you good-bye now. Your aunts wouldn't like me to in front of them."

She kissed him on each cheek, then flurried off. He heard her locking her suitcase. "Go downstairs," she ordered from the next room. "You're all right now. I need my room to dress in."

George pulled his dangly legs and arms into some sort of order and tried to leave the room. He wished he would go suddenly faint, dizzy; but nothing happened, and he felt he was too big to hold his breath until he sank into unbearable darkness. His mind flitted over Denise's words—"She called me 'little boy'—'but you will grow up to understand—and not to hate.' Oh, I don't want to, I don't want to grow up, don't want to understand!" he said, descending the stairs slowly one by one.

Charlie was at the foot of the stairway, trying to pull O'Flaherty into the hall. O'Flaherty was blubbering: "He was such a good man, may the Lord've . . . never hurt a fly!"

IV

Julie and Claire were standing just inside the living-room door, receiving newcomers. The rest of the guests and relatives sat stiffly around the room after going in to look at Grandfather. They whispered: "How lifelike he looks!" "Yes, Alec has put his heart into the old man's face; I've never seen him fix anyone prettier!" "He doesn't look a day over sixty!" "I think they powdered the tip of his nose; you know how Grandfather drank, all by himself, upstairs, when they weren't looking!" "It's a pity, but some of us must move on to make room for those to come!" (A sigh.) "And Cousin Jane not a month in the ground before him. It seems the whole family's . . ."

Julie held her bony hand out to Mr. O'Flaherty, who was weaving into the room with Charlie's assistance. Julie waited with her hand for O'Flaherty, while her eyes observed Charlie: he was about forty, with eyes wrinkled at the sides and his hair thinned at the

THE WAKE

edge of his temples. He had a hard look. She suddenly recognized him as the bootlegger her father had bought from in the old days—she had seen him once at the office slipping Father a package. She felt a secret pleasure in the detection.

O'Flaherty seized her hand in both of his. "Your father was a man after me own heart, Julie," he said. His whisky breath stunned her. She felt her cousins looking at her, could feel the questions in their eyes like darts of probity and smugness, and pointed with suspicion. "It's a pity for both you, Julie, and your sister, Claire—you're good women."

Claire shuddered, but bowed her head sedately to Mr. O'Flaherty.

"Many's the laugh we had in the tap together, in the old days," he went on, "him, and me, and O'Toole—dead like your father nigh on to nine months this Michaelmas."

Claire shivered delicately at the word *dead*. "It came as quite a shock," she said, in an attempt to change the subject, to conceal as best she could her hideous plight.

Julie released her hand from Mr. O'Flaherty's affectionate grip. "Won't you come into the kitchen for a cup of coffee, Mr. O'Flaherty? It's very hot. It will steady you."

"It's not drunk you're thinking me, is it, Miss Julie? Your father was understanding of them matters. 'It's to get away from the girls I come here,' he used to confide after a shot or two. 'They're so damned decent!'"

Claire and Julie flushed.

"I don't recall *you*," Julie raised her voice to the former bootlegger, in a second attempt to change the direction of the conversation. "You were one of my father's many friends?"

"Why did the Lord take such a good man?" O'Flaherty wept.

"Yes," Charlie answered through O'Flaherty's lament. "We did a little business of a sort. I'm truly sorry for you. He was a good man."

He shook Julie's hand with unpleasant and intimate significance. He guessed the disapproval and recognition in her eyes.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"I'm Charlie King," he said, the "sinister" grin (Julie liked detective stories immoderately) still on his face. "I think Miss Denise is expecting me, if you'd be good enough to let her know."

George jumped up from his chair at these words, glad of a chance to escape the tension in the room.

"I've come to get her," Charlie explained.

Claire looked him up and down, as if he'd come to get *her*.

"Yes, George," she said, "tell Denise to hurry. Her—*man* is here."

"Thank you for the encouraging observation," Charlie said to Claire.

O'Flaherty had raised his voice. He began to repeat his memories again. "'John,' he used to say to me (your father knew how to laugh after a drink or two) 'you're as Irish as the pre-verbial pig, and I deem the smell has a little of the same fashion—but I like you; yes, a blubbering old fool, but I like you!' And he'd slap me on the back hard enough to near make me roll over in the sawdust on the floor. . . ." O'Flaherty wavered on his feet. "And I loved *him*, with all the love of an Irish heart, bless the old . . . may the Lord take mercy on his everlasting soul!" O'Flaherty leaned back, swaying precariously, his gnarled hands clasped. "I'll fetch me a last look at his dear old face," he announced, staggering toward the dim parlor where his crony's body lay smothered in Uncle Alec's flowers. O'Flaherty's rosary swung from his fingers as he lurched. He pulled the beads rapidly on the chain.

"Julie, you better watch him," Claire said, meaning O'Flaherty.

"Madam," Charlie purposely misunderstood her, "I'm not going to steal the coffin. I'm just trying to keep an old friend of your father's straight!"

The first thing they saw in the parlor was Denise standing before the bier, gazing at Grandfather's face. She was crying softly. In one hand she held her suitcase, prepared to go.

"Hello, O'Flaherty," she whimpered through her tears.

"There's real angels in the room," O'Flaherty said to her, then

THE WAKE

fell on his knees and began his Hail Mary, full of grace, like the keening of the banshees he remembered from his childhood in the old country. "A penny in the eyes is better than tears," his mother had told him once. "It holds them shut and keeps the sadness from seeping in."

"I came, Denise," Charlie whispered. "Just as you asked." He put both arms around her waist from behind. "I was waiting a long time for those words."

George, who had been looking in vain for Denise upstairs, emerged in the doorway. He hated Charlie more than ever for holding Denise, for assuming the right to hold her. He felt a wave of agony sweep over him as she turned around, dropped her suitcase on the floor, and kissed him—right there in front of his grandfather, whose sewed lips could make no protest.

"Charlie—you've done it. I knew you'd come to take me out of here!"

Julie, who had watched from the doorway, could contain her feelings no longer.

"Get out!" she ordered. "Both of you! Making love over a coffin—it's disgraceful! You'd be making love to the dead man, Denise, if no one was looking!"

Denise looked at Julie, but said nothing.

"Aunt Julie," George gasped, tugging at his aunt's black lace mourning dress. "How could you say such an awful thing?"

His mother had come to the door to find out what the fuss was about. She heard the end of Julie's remark, and although she approved of Denise no more than Julie did, she admired Julie less. "Remember you're a bereaved daughter, Julie. You shouldn't lose your propriety faster than your grief, really!"

"We *are* getting out," Charlie said angrily. "You in your black lace mourning gown, Julie! I'll take my women in black lace underwear any day!"

"Charlie!" Denise stopped his lips with her hand. "We don't have to act like them."

V

George felt the tears swell in his eyes. A horror worse than of dead men filled him, a horror more moving than of the ritual which attended the dead: the horror of hate, the horrible acrimony of words, which resounded like distorted cymbals, clashing disjointedly in unexpected places, in soft places of tenderness and love. Denise was folding one hand into Charlie's, while he lifted her suitcase. She picked up a cardboard hatbox with her free hand. George remembered again some of the words she had said that afternoon upstairs to help him sleep, words which included the strange foreign-sounding names of Valery and Albert . . . who were they? Had Denise gone away before, with men? maybe worse than Charlie? He wanted to hide his head forever in his arms and shut out the bitter realization—no, she couldn't have; it couldn't have been like that! But when he buried his face in his arms, the thought struck him even more vividly. Denise was swinging across his vision with a hatbox and a suitcase, and funny little men with waxed moustaches clustered around her, laughing. All their names were Valery and Albert . . . they picked her up and tossed her in the air hilariously, roaring at their own humor and at the way the wind caught her skirt up like a great balloon. . . .

The front door banged.

George was being held by his mother. He heard O'Flaherty still muttering his Hail Marys, and he smelled the incense of flowers, of roses which spelled "Love in memory of Father," and echoes of all the voices: his aunt's, excited, and Charlie's, like iron clashing against iron, and Denise's, crying alone in front of his grandfather, as if she were begging his pity for something she had never explained to George. . . . His legs almost gave under him. Aunt Julie studied him in perplexity.

"I hate dead people!" George shouted through the tears he could no longer hold back. "And roses and lilies and candles that smell!"

"The boy's mind is overwrought," Julie said. "Maybe you'd

THE WAKE

better give him some milk and cake from the kitchen, Ruth."

"Come, dear," his mother said. "We'll have a bite to eat."

"I'm not hungry!" George shouted into all their faces. "I hate all of you, everybody!"

O'Flaherty had stood up and was weaving toward the hallway. He had listened to George's words with his head cocked to one side. He seemed more sober after his prayers. Several times his lips formed words silently before he could force them out: "Don't hate, George," he mumbled with some difficulty. "It's something your grandfather wouldn't have—wouldn't do . . . drunk or sober."

O'Flaherty reached his own toward George's shaking hands, to stroke them, to give them comfort and love. George raised his arm defiantly and struck O'Flaherty's knuckles with his curled fist. The rosary fell to the floor and broke, its little black beads scattering irretrievably in the deep pile of the carpet.

II

LOVE OF A KIND

Spring Holiday

A SHORT STORY BY HARRY NIX

LILLIE sat on the edge of the porch and waited for Jed. Like a little girl's, her feet dangled toward the ground, but she was careful that they did not touch the dirt, for the thought of scratching her new slippers made her feel weak inside. She ran her hands over the slippery new dress, over the full skirt and up over her breasts where the dress was slick and tight and shiny against her skin. She hoped Jed would like her in these things. When she had read his letter about his spring holiday, she went into town and got them, all for him.

But if Jed came home last night, where was he now? Why did he stay away? She looked up the hill and down at the shadow it gave to the Tennessee earth around her, wondering where he was, what time he would come. He had said that nothing could be as good as a holiday from school, but if he wanted to see her why did he stay away this morning?

Lillie had just taken the snapshots from her pocket and was thumbing through them for the unknown-hundredth time when her papa came out of the house and sat in a chair behind her. Occasionally she paused and looked at one of the pictures for a moment. She would like to see Jed in those places, wearing such fine clothes, with all his college friends around. She wondered what he was like there, if she could ever understand what he was like. But even if she could never know, if she could never meet his friends and know their names and go to all those places, she could sit here on the porch and hold it all in her two hands.

Jed would be coming over that hill, over her papa's fields, when he decided to come, if he did come.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

II

Her papa twisted in his chair so that it squeaked when he leaned over to spit. He cleared his throat and said suddenly: "That young'un's 'bout to bust his lungs, in there squallin' and carryin' on."

"Sounds nice, don't it, papa?" Lillie said.

"Couldn't say nothin' else. Just another mouth to feed, but couldn't say nothin' else."

"If I had a hundred babies, I'd love 'em all the same," Lillie said.

"That ain't no way fer you to be talkin'. You better git that Jed 'fore you start that kind o' talk. You better find out if he wants you with his big ideas."

"He wants me. Remember when he come from the Army? I was the first he come to." So long ago, it seemed, that Jed was in the Army—so long a time, but somehow, though he'd been half the world away, things seemed closer between them then.

"He's comin' from the univers'ty this time, Lillie, and it's a different thing."

"No, papa. I was first last Chrismus. I know Jed loves me."

She stacked the pictures together and placed them behind a post. She looked up at her papa, and said: "I told you we ought-a gone to town and met the train last night. He'd be here now if we'd met 'im."

"When yo' ma was havin' a baby!" he exclaimed. "Don't act crazy, Lillie. When the fam'ly has a young'un, the fam'ly stays home."

"I wish he'd make up his mind one way or other," she said.

"Jed ain't no good fer you, Lillie. He don't want'cha. Here he is, goin' near two years to the univers'ty, learnin' to farm, and his folks been farmin' since I c'n remember. Nobody in his fam'ly ever had so much schoolin', and it ain't needed neither."

"Jed's a smart boy," she said pensively.

"And you're a smart gal, too—a grown woman, I mean. When yo'

SPRING HOLIDAY

ma was yo' age, she was havin' kids and keepin' me a house. Why, look at that body you got. Damned if I don't think God made you on a purpose, Lillie. You're a walkin' sin, you're so good-lookin', even if I do say so. But you cain't help it, God knows. Cain't do nothin' 'bout yo' good looks, I reckon. But Jed don't deserve no such a woman. But find out if he wants you, Lillie. Ain't no sense in wastin' them clothes. If he don't want'cha, git a man that does."

"All right, papa," she said. "I'm goin'."

III

She slipped down off the porch and began walking across the yard. The new slippers pinched her feet, but she would wear them because Jed— Would he like them? Would he like for her to chase him like this? With sudden determination, she took the slippers off, buckled them, and hung them over her shoulder. She began running uphill, toward his pa's fields, as fast as she could. The dress flapped around her sun-browned legs and her hair played about her face as she ran. Her toes clawed into the warm earth and the soil wiggled up like worms over her feet, as she made a deep trail of her running across the terraced furrows.

When she reached the top of the hill, where a fence separated her pa's and his pa's lands, she stopped to catch a breath. Rubbing her feet against the fence wire to clean the dirt from them, she held her head high, shading her eyes from the sun, straining to see through the tousled hair and down the slope of his pa's field. Across the half-plowed area, she could see his pa and a horse-and-plow over in a distant corner. Climbing up on a fence post where her view might be extended, she saw Jed coming out of the woods on the other side, swinging his pa's dinner bucket in one hand. Her heart turned flips as she called him.

"Jed! Jed! Come up here!"

He looked toward the calling, then broke into a run.

"Lillie!" The tin bucket was glistening like glass in the sun.

Lillie saw the smile that possessed his face as he climbed the hill.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

And then he was with her, with both his arms hugging her legs dangling from the post. "What're you doing here?" he asked.

"I might ask you that," Lillie said. She wanted to be coy, to shield her delight. "Ain'tcha glad to see me?"

"I never was gladder—never saw a prettier woman."

He squeezed her ankle, and she jumped to the ground. She quickly put the slippers on her feet and leaned back against the fence. Jed's arms went about her waist, he picked her up to him, and he kissed her lips. "God, you smell good, Lillie." The tin pail went whirling down the hillside, emptying itself of the cold lunch he was taking to his papa.

"Why didn'tcha come to see me when you got in?" Lillie asked.

"I did—last night. It was late. There was a lot of folks around the house. I started to go in, but they said—"

"Yes. Mama had the baby last night, but you could-a come in anyhow."

She pressed her head against his chest and dug the fingers of one hand deep behind his collar bone.

"Jed, I know I cain't ever love you more'n I do now."

He kissed her forehead. She turned away so he could not see her face, but he knew that she was crying, for his shirt was dark where her tears had wet it.

"What's the matter, Lillie? Looks like you'd be happy."

"I'm happy, Jed. But I want-a cry too. I love you, Jed."

"And I love you, Lillie." That was all he could say. He kicked a rock from the ground and watched it bounce into the field below. He was insecure, loving her, wishing he could say more. He remembered so many times when he had dreamed of telling her how he felt, but when he saw her it was impossible to say what he had planned. It was that way again, and he could say nothing but "I love you, Lillie."

"Springtime, Jed," Lillie said. "It's really springtime! Don't it make you feel diff'rent? I useta lay awake in the winter, thinkin' 'bout us. But now it's spring, and you come home. Don't go back to the univers'ty, Jed."

SPRING HOLIDAY

"I've got to," he said.

"Why?"

He could not say why immediately. He only knew that he had to go back. He faced her. "Look, Lillie, let me come to your house later. I'll see you after a while."

"You won't come. You don't want-a see me."

His throat began to tighten with an unfamiliar fear. He could not talk to her about anything. He felt her hand at his elbow, then move down to his hand. He started to walk away.

"Where you goin'?" she asked.

"To the spring. I'm thirsty."

"Wait. I'll go with you."

IV

Together they went silently down the hillside, through last year's broomstraw and this year's jimsonweeds, down through the half-plowed field, ducking the squat growth of gallberry bushes and young bay trees, until they came to a clearing in the thicket. It was tangled with shadows there, where a spring flowed from under a slab of grey rock. The sunlight drifted through a sieve of honeysuckle, touching the flimsy fingers of the willow, crawling over the berry bushes and the timid grass.

Jed, on his hands and knees, drank from the spring. The water was like a sedative in his stomach, removing anguish and replenishing assurance.

"I always liked this place," he said.

"Me, too," Lillie said. "I like the sun in here." She sat on the rock, looking at him.

"Yep, the sun's like a big grapefruit. And it's so bright you can't look it straight in the face."

"Guess you might call it that—a grapefruit," Lillie snickered. "Don't guess nobody knows what it is."

"Some folks do," he said earnestly. "Some folks know everything."

He sat beside Lillie, with his arms folded across his knees. She

AMERICAN VANGUARD

watched him, listened to the words he spoke, and feared him, his education. She believed that he was rising above her, and she could not hold on to him. More than anything else in the world, she had to hold on.

"Ma had the baby last night," she said.

"Yeah. What's that got to do with me?"

"Nothin'." She was laughing. "You're so doggone crazy, Jed."

"How come?"

She did not answer. She picked a honeysuckle blossom and twirled it before her nose.

"Pretty, huh? But you know the prettiest thing in the world to me?"

"What?"

"A woman when she's big."

"You're the crazy one."

"I useta think about the springtime, Jed. I knew the little'un would be comin' in the spring, and ever' time I thought of ma havin' the baby, I'd think of us. Is that silly? Well, I did. I was waitin' fer you to come home, hopin' we could git married. Why cain't we, Jed?"

"We just can't, Lillie. We'll have to wait a while."

"I reckon it'll always be 'a while,' " she said. Her eyes were dry, but her voice had the sound of weeping. "I want you, Jed, and I want-a be your wife. I want us to have kids and a house and all. I want-a be big and pretty like ma was."

"What's so damned pretty about a big woman?" he asked, laughing at her.

"Well, it's a—a sort of a sign, I guess. It holds a man and woman together. That's what it means."

"It can't mean a thing," he said.

"I want to marry you, Jed," Lillie said.

"But I'm leaving in a couple of days, and—"

"That cain't stop us! Cain't nothin' stop us!"

"I learned a lot," he said. "I can't stop going yet."

SPRING HOLIDAY

"What'cha learned, Jed?"

"More than I thought I could. I met folks from the four corners, and there's some smart ones, if you don't know it. No, Lillie, I can't stop going yet."

Lillie lay back on the rock, with one brown leg extended in front of her and the other bent to brace her body. She held the back of her head in the palms of her hands, and her hair fell away from her face. Her eyes caught all the blue of the sky; her mouth was as pink as the brightest thunderwood; her dress was wide at the neck, and a faint breeze fluttered it away from her shoulders. She lay quite still, looking above her, straight at nothing.

Jed saw her as if she were an expensive automobile he could not afford to buy. In the near-silent way of an uneducated man, he felt, he could never speak elaborately enough to describe how Lillie looked.

"I wish we could be married, but I want us to have something first," he said.

"Have what? We won't ever have nothin'."

"Yes, some day we will."

"How you goin' to get anything?"

"I don't know, but if I'm wise enough I will. I'm going to own all this land and more just as good. I'll have fine horses and cows and the best farm in the country. I'll show folks how to farm. But first I'm learning how. My plans are whoppers!"

"Where's the money comin' from to start with?"

"I'll make it somehow. I'll get it."

Lillie laughed whimsically. "You goin' to have a car, Jed?"

"If you want one."

"I'd love a car," she said. "Papa learnt me to drive since you been gone, and I'd love a car."

"You'll have one and I'll have one," he teased. "About anything we want, I reckon."

"So how long 'fore you'll have that money, Jed? How long 'fore we c'n marry?"

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"Not long," he said. "A couple of years maybe."

" 'A couple of years!' " Tears came to her eyes. "I cain't wait forever, Jed."

V

He did not speak. He watched her as she lay on the rock, while the sun sprayed over her. Lillie was perfect. She was a child—a girl—made like a woman—her breasts heaving. Even the pine-scented breeze of the woods seemed to speak of her beauty. The smell, the place, and Lillie—all combined to flood his mind with a river of desire which he could not dam out, a desire that colored his face with its reflection.

As he watched her, timing the rise of her every breath, she grinned and crooked a finger at him. He bent to kiss her, and she held him so tight that he could not resist, forgot all semblance of resistance, and he did not try. Her body became his own and, with the illusion that *he* possessed her, Jed was caught in Lillie's love. He forgot all that he had said. An unreal future was lost in the too-real present, and he did not care. In the rapid beauty of loving her, he had no doubt that it was meant to be this way.

Finally, when he sat up beside her, she asked: "Now, Jed, when we goin' to marry?—tomorrow?"

His hand trembled against her with the stammering of a silent voice. "Yes," he managed to say, "tomorrow."

"Come on," she said. "Let's go."

"No," he muttered. "You—"

She kissed him lightly on the cheek and stood up. "All right. I'll go."

Through a lace of willow branches he looked after her as she walked out of the clearing and across the furrows. He could hardly believe what he had told her. He could hardly distinguish the words he had spoken. She was going up the hill, happily, to her ma and her pa and a dozen kids. She was going away, maybe to dream of another season. Perhaps she was going away to enjoy the prettiness of a big

SPRING HOLIDAY

woman. Now, nothing was certain and nothing held shape. Her happiness had come to him as misery, and on this mere hinge his future swung.

He walked out into the field until he saw his pa and the horse-and-plow. He suddenly remembered the dinner pail he had thrown away and, turning back toward the house, he began running as fast as he could.

The Mermaids Singing

A SHORT STORY BY HAROLD APPLEBAUM

PHILIP crossed the border line between sleep and waking without opening his eyes and lay, breathing quickly, trying to hold together the fast-fading threads of his dream. It was an obvious Freudian thing of climbing endless stairs that disappeared behind him as he ran, and somewhere a man who hid his face was calling him and pointing backward.

He gave up his task, opened his eyes and frowned at the ceiling. Dreams were such unsatisfactory things to remember—no plot, no beginning, and no end. But they waited, just beyond the fringe of consciousness, for the eye to close, the mind to turn away. And then the gibberish of symbols marching by—they told you something was wrong, but had no suggestions to offer.

He blinked the sleep out of his eyes and made a conscious effort to stay awake. The air in the room was cool; there was a tang to it that promised frost and early winter. He lifted his head and looked toward the window. Beyond the curtains that billowed with the breeze and stilled again, the sky was growing lighter. Dawn is a lonely time, he thought. Hour of beginnings, sun coming up on time forever, creatures being nudged awake to live or die that day. Dawn—I remember a sunrise at Niagara, he thought. Honeymoon idiots, they had been, and Helen woke him by kissing him repeatedly on the ear. They had dressed in the dark, laughingly, and found their way down to the bridge. They had waited, clinging together, wet with mist and deaf with the steady thunder of the falls, until the east took fire and the mist was a rosy inferno of light over the gorge. Then they saw they were not alone, and all the couples on the bridge had laughed as hard as they.

Helen—it was always Helen, leading him on into experiences like

THE MERMAIDS SINGING

that. What had he been until she came?—Associate Professor of English at the college, blind with the bookish beauty of the past, drunk with the serious importance of what he told in his lectures, and deaf to everything else in the world. Forty years of living with books, nourishing himself on adjectives and ideas, sleeping with words, amusing himself only with deviations from and variations of the same old themes. That was a life, he thought with disgust. Forty years—before Helen had come.

He raised his head and looked across at her. She lay on her side, facing away from him. In the room's stillness he could hear her breathing, evenly and slowly. The curving angle of her shoulder showed above the quilt, ran gracefully down the line of her body to where her hip curved again. Her hair ran over the pillow like a dark river, flowing every way at once. He watched her gravely for a long minute, reflecting that he knew exactly what she would do if he touched her, if he ran his hand along the cool curve of her side. He refrained, not wanting to wake her. She preferred to wake rather than to be awakened, he knew. And she almost childishly insisted that she never dreamed.

He wondered why some people dreamed and others did not. Our friend Freud again? He smiled to himself. Perhaps she really did dream and didn't want him to know. His smile faded. He dangled the thought morbidly in his mind longer than was necessary, viewing it from all sides. Be honest, he warned himself. He thought wryly along his gaunt, pale scholar's body, seeking some excellence, some asset that he owned beyond all others. The mind, he suggested bitterly—she could be in love with my mind. That was a fine substantial thing to dream about, an object of worship that would bring small ecstasy and would warm few winter nights.

What was it, then, that burned between them, fusing their separate and ordinary souls and bodies into a single passionate whole? He could explain his own exalted feelings as she led him through the strange and wonderful experiences of love. But Helen was young. Helen was beautiful. Helen deserved as good as she gave.

II

Philip deliberately blocked his line of thought, aware in what direction it was leading. Think about something else, he told himself, shifting his weight in the bed. Think about lectures—first class, second class today. “The fundamental importance of Whitman’s influence on modern American poetry cannot be overestimated.” Never mind Whitman, his mind said. What about Helen?

He remembered the first time he had noticed her, more than three years ago in the Lit course he was giving. He was tired, he recalled, just after midyear exams, and merely going through the motions of lecturing. She had risen coolly, slim and serious, and pointed out a glaring error in his last statement. Her self-assurance had confused him, and he corrected himself awkwardly, managing to look very badly in the process.

She had come to him after class and apologized. He was amused at her grave insistence that she shouldn’t have spoken.

“Nonsense,” he had said, trying not to sound pedantic. “You caught me fairly, and I deserved it. I need somebody alert to keep me up on my toes these days—I’m getting to be a regular old absent-minded professor.”

She corrected him quickly. “Wrong again. You’ve only been lecturing here for five years—I looked it up in the Bulletin. Not old, not absent-minded, but you *are* regular.”

Her reply delighted him. “Only five years? It seems like much more.” He tried hard to sound gallant, aware only that he must seem younger for her. For she was merely twenty—just a girl, he had thought.

Her smile was a soft transformation from bright to brighter. “Oh, no,” she said. “It’s only students like me who make it seem like more.”

And he had found himself smiling after her when she had gone, and feeling somehow far less weary than before. There was an air

THE MERMAIDS SINGING

about her, a strength and vitality. He must have been very lonely, he realized suddenly, that a smile could mean so much to him.

But that was how it started. Then he began to watch for her in the classroom, aiming his words directly at her, hoping she would favor him again. Somehow the first shy formalities of friendship were passed between them, and there were Sunday walks into the country and late dinner dates. Their relationship soon became campus gossip, and he was the object of much good-natured ribbing from his colleagues until they saw that he was quite serious.

He was able to smile now when he thought back on the foolish, unbecoming stunts he had dared in that first flood of love for her. She had never discovered, never guessed what it had cost him to step so far out of character to meet her on her own ground, play at her games, appear with her at dances and the beach. He looked at her in the morning half-light, lying beside him so girlishly, so beautifully. She made him think of lovely legendary things—nymphs, mermaids—creatures no one had ever captured until now. Once more he marveled that it had come to him to possess her, to have her for his own. It had been worth it.

He listened as his thoughts returned to the room—outside the window tireless starlings were twittering in the ivy, robins were noisy on the lawn. The world was waking; day was nearly at hand.

III

Beside him Helen stirred in her sleep and turned, facing him now. He held his breath, knowing how close she was to waking. Her eyes remained closed. He let his breath out slowly, feasting his eyes on her sleeping beauty. One rounded shoulder was bared where her gown had slipped back, and the ivory glow of her flesh stirred him sharply. Her loveliness seemed forever fresh to him. He wanted to lower his face into the valley between her breasts and drink the cool fire he knew was there. He had a powerful impulse to touch her—touch her anywhere—to sanctify himself by touching his flesh to

AMERICAN VANGUARD

then, as suddenly she recognized him and she was Helen again, awake and ready to be adored.

She yawned prettily and stretched like a kitten. "Morning," she said sleepily, her face two inches from his. Her hair fell about her face like dark serpents, like the thing in my mind, he thought. He held steady while she reached up and kissed him impishly on the tip of the nose. The excellent humor with which she always arose annoyed him this morning—he didn't want her to be nice to him.

Her violet eyes, dark in the shadow of the room, were fixed on his face. He let himself roll over on his back and lay staring at the ceiling. "You were watching me," she said tentatively, stating a fact, yet expecting an answer.

Let her wait, he thought. The chill of what he had seen in her eyes was still with him, and he could read no immediate explanation on the blank ceiling he was regarding. Let her lie as I was lying, trying to remember what she had dreamed, wondering what it meant, perhaps thinking of their life together. "You were dreaming," he said.

"Dreaming!" She laughed the word into the morning silence of the room. "How do you know?"

He smiled at the ceiling. He had the answer, but he wouldn't throw it at her, wouldn't let her know that he thought any more of it than any ordinary husbandly conclusion. Let her squirm, let her wonder how he knew—let her have some time for thinking as he had had this morning. But then the words were burning at his lips and he wanted to hear them said—"You were talking in your sleep, dear."

She fell silent, and Philip's mind was out and away, winging through time and distance, playing with words and memories like a careless child. He remembered the faculty social they had attended, and the filmy white armful of her, floating above his clumsy steps as they danced. He remembered a silence like this—they had gone into the garden and he struggled through the carefully rehearsed phrases of his proposal, and her silence had been like winter in his

THE MERMAIDS SINGING

heart. And then, like springtime bursting on the world, she had broken the stillness with, "Why, yes, Philip— Yes— Oh, yes!" He wondered if she still remembered exactly how his voice had sounded, babbling the delighted words of pleasure at her acceptance. He had worried so about the twenty-year difference in their ages, but she had laughed and kissed away his fears, and it was agreed. And now, less than three years afterward, here he was, sniffing like some grim Othello after her every thought, suspicious of her very dreams. He was suddenly ashamed. What was the matter with him?—he was as jealous as an old cuckold. Let her have her pretty dreams, her young giants—as long as they were merely dreams, he was foolish to be concerned.

He rolled over, facing her again. "What did I say in my sleep?" she asked. He was surprised—she hadn't disclaimed the fact of her dreaming.

He smiled down at her. "Plenty," he said, nodding his head gravely.

"Philip, you're teasing. What did I say?"

He acted very mysterious, enjoying his moment. "Oh, hardly anything, really." He let his face grow stern and accusing. "Just a name, that's all. Just someone's name."

It was fun, teasing her, he was thinking, but her face went suddenly pale, and like a flash the whole round of suspicion returned to Philip. She remembers the dream, he told himself—she's afraid she spoke his name! But Helen's face was already composed, and the moment had passed. "I don't believe a word of it," she said gaily. "Besides, I never dream. You're making it all up." She made a roguish face at him. "Are you sure *you* weren't dreaming?"

He snorted, realized that he was on the verge of answering sharply, and held his silence. He was in a foul mood this morning—some vague, half-invisible truth was hovering about him, waiting to be grasped. He was annoyed, yet he could find no tangible reason. Breakfast, he thought, irrelevantly—after breakfast I'll feel better. He embraced the conviction and sat up, feeling with his toes for his slippers at the side of the bed.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"You're six minutes early, Philip," she said, a small surprise in her voice. She liked to prod him about his meticulous habits, his unvarying routine of morning duties. Ordinarily he didn't mind—her banter struck a pleasant note in his ritual of rising—but today he found himself wishing she would leave him alone.

"Stay where you are," he said. "I'll fix my own breakfast." He wanted to keep the privacy of his thoughts. He had long been accustomed to figuring out his own problems, slowly, stubbornly, rationally.

"Oh, no, you don't," she said, throwing back the covers and getting out of bed. "One cup of that coffee like you made last time and your stomach will be out of commission for a week. You know how easily it's upset." He shuddered, remembering, and watched her throw on her robe in little rippling waves of silk. She came around the bed and playfully tried to push him toward the bathroom. "Come on, now. You take your shower and I'll take care of breakfast."

He let himself be turned and started, and then suddenly all of the bodiless doubts and indecision that had been plaguing him all morning rose in a wave and made him turn upon her. He caught her by the shoulders, fiercely pulled her close to him and kissed her roughly, not understanding the urgency that drove him, but knowing that he *must*, that he wanted to hurt her.

The feeling left him as quickly as it had come, and they were standing facing each other, staring in surprise. Philip heard his own breathing, harsh and unnatural in his throat. Her eyes were wide. "Why, Philip," she said in a small disturbed voice, holding the back of her hand to her mouth. "You hurt me."

He could say nothing, shaken as he was by the strange desire that had possessed him. Why had he done it? Why did he want to hurt her? The answer eluded him, but the question beat at his brain like a gong. He had a taste of something salty in his mouth and realized that his lip was bleeding. He touched it with his fingers, saw the red stain, and was suddenly sick with disgust for himself. "I'm sorry, Helen," he said, and his voice was very loud in his ears. "Really I'm

THE MERMAIDS SINGING

sorry. I just felt—I wanted to kiss you, I guess—” He trailed off into silence.

She rubbed her lips again, gave him one more puzzled look, as if to say I don’t know what’s got into you this morning, and she smiled. “Go and take your shower, dear,” she said gently. “I’ll put the coffee on.”

Apparently that ended it for her, but Philip went through the motions of bathing and dressing with a troubled mind. This would pass, he knew—it would disappear as soon as he had something else to occupy his mind, as soon as he got to class and began his lecturing. He brushed his thinning hair carefully to conceal the tiny bald spot, thinking, amusedly, perhaps I haven’t so much on my mind after all.

They hardly spoke at breakfast. Philip was still trying to convince himself that his worry was all nonsense, and he hardly noticed what he ate. If Helen was aware of his preoccupation, she said nothing, but sat dutifully by while he downed his coffee automatically and pushed back his chair. Then she rose, took his hat from the hook, and handed it to him, exactly as she had been doing for the last two years. “It’s eight-sixteen,” she said, glancing at the clock. “One minute ahead of schedule.”

He looked at his wrist watch without seeing it. “So I am,” he said. He had just arrived at the comforting conclusion that this was just one of those mornings—no sense taking it out on Helen. He placed his hat on his head. “Well, dear,” he began.

Unexpectedly she giggled. “Fix your hat, dear—you’ve got it on backwards.”

He snatched it off and set it right, annoyed beyond words and jolted completely out of his newly won composure. He had an impulse to run out, slam the door behind him. But she came smilingly forward and put her hands on his shoulders, her face full of tenderness. “You’re such a dear, Philip,” she said. “One minute you’re so serious and stern. The next you’re sweet and kind and considerate. Then you’re ready to bite my head off because I remind you that you’re acting like an absent-minded professor—which you really are.” She stood up on her toes and kissed him quickly. “Do you

know what you really are? To me, I mean? You're a little boy—one I have to watch over and care for, mend his clothes and keep happy—the kind of little boy I've always dreamed of finding for a husband."

Philip's anger faded, and he felt foolish and ashamed. But some personal little devil made him leap to take advantage of the opening she had left. "Dreamed? Dreamed?" he teased. "I thought you *never* dreamed."

"Now you're starting again," she pouted. "Want me to take back all the nice things I said about you?"

He shook his head, inordinately pleased with himself for having put his fear into words again, wanting somehow to continue the conversation. "Tell me more," he said, leaning against the door.

But she pointed meaningfully at his watch and laid an urgent hand on his arm. "Time to go. Have a nice day, Philip. Oh, and while I think of it, do you want me to call the cleaner's about your grey flannel suit?"

He snapped his fingers boyishly. "Say, that's right. I want that for tomorrow." He was glad she had remembered. She was a wonderful creature. His eyes caressed her once more, touching the disarray of her soft hair that somehow made her look even more desirable. "Good," he said at last, and he was addressing himself rather than her. He kissed her firmly and went out. When he looked back once, she was waving to him from the door.

V

Walking the few blocks to the college took exactly ten and one-half minutes, and he covered the leaf-strewn ground with long, thoughtful strides, looking eagerly forward to the day's work as the end of his unpleasant feeling of uncertainty. As soon as he had something else to occupy his mind—

He threw himself into his task happily—this was by now as natural for him as breathing. By the time he thought about Helen again, he was halfway through his second class. Lecturing had come to be

THE MERMAIDS SINGING

more and more automatic with him these last few years, and already he hardly remembered what he had spoken of in his first class.

But this was his modern poetry class, and he was telling them about T. S. Eliot. The choice of poet, he thought, was well adapted to his mood of the morning. He had already said that Eliot was "the laureate of nostalgia, of dwindling hope and universal purposelessness," told them how he had savagely portrayed the decadence of the human race, wrote bitterly of racial introversion, self-torture, madness, and despair.

He was reading to them from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," adding the peculiar dryness of his voice to the weary, disillusioned plaint of the aging dilettante. The room was hushed and attentive—he sensed that the grey, depressing mood of the poem had chilled them into silence. He droned cheerlessly into the last stanza:

I grow old. . . . I grow old. . . .

I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?

I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

There were six more lines, and he read them, but his voice seemed to be coming from somewhere else. Into his mind, all at once, flashed the meaning of everything—the dream, the suspicions, the rough, sadistic kiss, the irritation and the tiny nibbling doubts of his virility. Suddenly he seemed to see himself for the first time as he must appear to others—lean, spare, middle-aged, with thinning hair and shell-rimmed glasses—"I grow old. . . . I grow old. . . ."

A caricature of himself as Prufrock leered up at him from the page and said it again, sadly, musingly. Of course—of course—the careful dieting, the ritual of parting his hair, the grey flannel suit, Helen as a mermaid—he *was* Prufrock, aging symbol of frustration and impotence, full of nostalgia and regrets.

He thought of Helen—pictured himself—tomorrow, or next

AMERICAN VANGUARD

month, next year—sweating in a nightmare darkness, clutching feebly at her, feeling her white-curved warmth drawing away, forever and further away. How long would it be before she guessed his fear? How long until she knew, and the years that lay between them would grow to a barren wall?

Shuddering, he closed his eyes, pressing his hands hard over them, trying to shut out, to erase the shattering picture before him. Nothing meant anything. Love was a passing mockery. Happiness and unhappiness were one and the same. Time was a treacherous friend that became a pitiless enemy. Impotence now or later—it was no matter.

The nervous rustling and shifting of feet recalled him to the room. He was supposed to tell them—tell them what? Their young, shining faces were uplifted, waiting—how could he say it?

“Eliot,” he said finally, and the name came out like a sob. “Eliot writes of men with a deadly, caustic insight that tears away the illusions they have built around the spirit.” He paused and cleared his throat. “Eliot is a breaker of dreams,” he said, and was aware that now, even to the class, his voice must sound hollow, dry, and old.

Margie Stone

A SKETCH BY LILI DANCHIK

A FEW years ago, when we met Margie Stone at the Sullivans' house, I remember thinking she was embarrassingly homely: her hair wispy and colorless, eyelashes sparse to the point of invisibility, nose crooked and bony. Her whole face seemed crooked, with a faintly lopsided look. I remember the faraway spark of wistfulness in her drab brown eyes. Her mouth, the only good feature of that face, was deeply curved with some of the same wistfulness one saw in her eyes.

At the time we met her, Marge had been married to George Stone about fifteen years. Many years older than Marge, George was red-haired, freckled, vulgar. The depression had reduced them to poverty, his business and savings swept away. From these ruins they had just begun to emerge, he with a floorwalker's job in a department store, and Marge with a salesgirl's earnings in a women's specialty shop.

After the first few years, we saw little of them. George's vulgarity was depressing to us. The usual commonplace remarks exchanged, we found little to talk about. Now and then, however, I did run into Marge, ugly and awkward as ever, with the same wistful look and warmhearted rush of words. Longing for a child and unable to bear one, she poured out her affection on George, who was incapable of comprehending its depth and equally incapable of returning it. Marge was so affectionate to her friends that she often embarrassed them with unexpected little gifts. Nothing for herself. She was a giving girl. Uncomplainingly she worked at her tiring job, each day ending with George yawning over the evening papers.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

This was the Marge I knew until a few nights ago, when we ran into her at the Sullivans' cocktail party. She was there alone—George had gone to New York for a few days—and perhaps because she was lonely, drank many cocktails during the evening.

It was an interesting party with people of many skills and professions gathering into one small group after another, discussing world affairs, art, books, and the usual potpourri one discusses at such parties. While my husband was pleasantly cornered by a lovely French artist, I drifted from group to group, talking a little, listening a little, until I noticed that Marge was sitting all alone in a far corner of the room, looking left out and unhappy. I went over and sat on the arm of her chair.—“How are you feeling, Marge?” I asked. She did not answer. Instead she drew one finger along the low neckline of my dress.—“Some dress, Lil,” she said. “Really sexy.”

A little surprised at this sally, I began to talk about clothes in a general sort of way until she interrupted me. “Y’know, Lil, I guess if you’re honest, you’ll admit that all women are whores at heart. Don’tcha think so?”

Flustered a little by this bluntness from Marge, I stammered out, “I don’t know, Marge. I never thought about it.”

“Aw g’wan,” she said, “be honest. Y’know sump’n? I’ve never been sore ’cause a man wanted to sleep with me. I felt real good about it. I felt kind of, well, y’know, Lil, kind of good-lookin’ and all. I guess every woman likes to feel that way. Don’t you?”

“Well,” I began, “my husband—”

She waved her glass at me. “Husbands are awright a’course, but lemme tell ya sump’n, Lil, there ain’t a woman alive that didn’t sometime wanna sleep with another man. Now take me, fr’instance. Y’know there’s a man in this town I’m just nuts about. Honest to Gawd, Lil, he’s wunnerful. He’s tall ’n’ dark ’n’ real slim, a doctor, but a’course I can’t tell ya his name. Well, y’know, Lil, ever since that man operated on me, I’ve been nuts about him.” She looked into her now empty glass. “Just a minute, Lil. Gotta get another drink.”

MARGIE STONE

I watched her weave her way back to the chair, holding her glass in a careful drunken way. Slowly she sat down, stuck her legs out before her, and studied them. "Y'know," she began, "I'm gonna tell ya somep'n else—this doctor likes me, too. Why, he had me come up to his office to look at my incision. There wasn't nothin' wrong with my incision. He just wanted to see me. He's wunnerful. He said to me, 'Marge, I don't know what it is about you, but I could really go for you. You've got something, all right,' 'n' once, while I was waiting for a bus, he came along and picked me up, 'n' on the way home he stopped the car and kissed me." A little worry crept into her tone. "Y'won't tell anybody, Lil? George would just about kill me, I guess."

I said, "Of course, I won't tell anybody. Don't be silly." Relieved, she continued, "Lil, he keeps asking me to come up to his office, 'n' Lil, I wanna; but I'm scared. Lil, I never wanted anything so much as to sleep with that man. It's making me wild thinking about him. Tell me, Lil, what'll I do?"

Advise her? How could I advise her? Anything I said might be the wrong thing. So, feeling like a heel, I groped for some way to avoid committing myself, some way to keep out of her troubles. I laughed. "Look, honey," I said, "you won't feel this way tomorrow. Tomorrow, if I tell you all the things you just said, you'll think it's funny."

She did not appear to hear me. "Honest, Lil," she said, "if I didn't think I'd get pregnant, I'd go—but Lil, what if I get pregnant—George'd be awfully s'picious."

I knew then that she was in earnest. What could I tell her? I wished she hadn't picked me as her confidante. So I said a little coldly, "Listen, Marge, I can't advise you."

The reddish-brown gaze faltered, the plain face became a shade plainer. She shrugged her shoulders. "Yeah, guess you're right. Guess y'don't think much of the idea. Yeah." For the next moment we sat in uneasy silence. Then she sat up almost briskly, and in a changed tone said, "Lil, lemme give ya a pair of nylons. I got some the other day."

AMERICAN VANGUARD

I patted her shoulder. "That's awfully sweet of you, hon, but I've got three pairs. You keep yours."

"But I wanna give 'em to ya, Lil, I wanna, 'n' if ya don't take 'em, you stink. Honest to Gawd, Lil, y'won't lemme do nothin' for ya, 'n' if ya don't take the nylons, you just stink."

I took the nylons.

Four Fridays

A SHORT STORY BY MATTHEW HELD

THERE was a soft, steady undertone of rolling drums. If you listened carefully as Charley was listening, you could hear it very plainly, getting louder, faster. Charley listened. Smothered beneath the flutes and bassoons, the drums rolled steadily.

"It's beautiful, isn't it?" Beverly said.

"Yes, I think it's very nice."

"Sometimes, though, I get mad at the music."

"Why? What'd it do to you?"

"Oh, nothing really," she said. "Just sometimes you get so wrapped up in the music . . ."

"It's beautiful music."

"Yes. It is beautiful."

There was one lamp lit, over near the window. The rest of the living room was very dim, and in the corner the phonograph had been playing, for a long time, the beautiful music, and Charley had sat on the couch, his legs stretched out, his head back, eyes closed, conscious that something was happening.

"You've been very quiet, Charley." She leaned her head on his shoulder. "You're not usually so quiet."

"How do you know?"

"Well . . . you're not."

"Usually," he said. "How do you know what I usually am? I only see you Fridays."

"Well, then," she said, "you're not usually so quiet on Fridays."

"There have been a million Fridays."

"Only four. There've been only four Fridays for us."

"That's a nice number."

"The other three you talked a lot."

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"What did I talk about?"

"You."

"There's no more. All I take is three Fridays. You know everything about me now."

"No. I don't think so. I wish I did."

"Sure you do," he said. "Three Fridays. I've timed it."

"No. You've told me some things, but it's not enough." She raised her head and placed her hands on his cheeks, looking down at his eyelids. "I wish I could walk through your mind."

He laughed. "It's a mess. You'd probably break your neck." He laughed again, thinking of Beverly walking through his mind, dodging the splintered furniture littering the cold concrete floor, frightened by the suddenly appearing faces that leered from the cold concrete walls.

"I bet it'd be in pretty colors."

"Black and grey. I'm color blind."

"No." She kissed his lips. "It's pretty colors. All light blue and pink and Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony coming in at the window."

"It sounds nice."

"It's beautiful. All blue and pink." She had her eyes closed now, thinking of it. "So beautiful."

"Except for the concrete walls."

"No. There are no concrete walls."

He opened his eyes and saw the way she was thinking of it, and then she looked down at him and smiled and kissed him.

"Get me a drink, Beverly."

The music had gotten louder. Now it was from *Carmen*. By Bizet, he thought, and smiled because he had remembered. Someone was playing the violin very loud and sharp and well.

. . . Rhythm on the drum. . . . Beat out that rhythm. . . .

"Should I mix it, Charley?"

"No, never mix it."

"Chaser?"

"Ginger ale."

FOUR FRIDAYS

She brought two glasses, one with the rye and the other with the ginger ale, and placed the rye in his hand and the ginger ale on the table next to the couch. She sat close to him and watched him drink the rye. He drank it fast and made a face.

"I don't think you even like that stuff."

"I don't," he said, taking a sip of the ginger ale.

"Why do you drink it?"

"It makes me happy," he said. "Lately I can't make love to a girl unless I have some rye in my belly."

"Oh, I think you could."

"No. I really can't. In fact, tonight I think even the rye isn't going to do any good."

He took another sip of the ginger ale and concentrated very hard on the music, and after a while she got up and mixed a drink for herself. It would be bourbon, he knew. She liked bourbon very much.

"You did it prettily," she said. "You led up to it and said it very prettily."

. . . Rhythm on the drum. . . . Beat out that rhythm. . . .

"Tell me about it. Try and tell me about it."

"It's just that it's nothing any more," he said. "It's hard to explain. It was something, but now it's nothing."

"Is it because I won't sleep with you?"

"It's nothing. There are no because's. All of a sudden it got to be nothing."

"Do you want to hear me say it? Do you want to hear me say I'll sleep with you?"

"No. Please, Bev. All of a sudden it was nothing. It sorta dropped out of me."

"What is it?" She was standing in front of him, holding the glass with both hands, still looking very cool and lovely. "I'm still the same. Nothing's changed."

He shook his head. "Inside me. That's where it changed."

She looked at him, silent, looked at his face, his eyes staring at

AMERICAN VANGUARD

something, maybe a button on her dress. "You better go then," she said. "Go right away so I'll get a good start on forgetting. But Charley, please, please, do one thing for me."

"Yes." He watched her fingers gripping the glass get very white.

"Just feel lousy when you walk out of here. Feel like a heel. At least feel that way."

"Yes." He got up and walked toward the door and opened it, and just then the phonograph clicked and was silent, and he knew there were no more records left to make beautiful music.

Match the Pieces

A SHORT STORY BY LEON HOROWITZ

WHEELING in to the curb, Paul hesitated before cutting the motor of his car. The dark quiet street unfolded before him, shaded by elm trees rustling wistfully in the gentle breeze of a summer midnight. Lost for a moment in the tranquil spell, in the peaceful scene, he closed his eyes, filling himself with the fragrant magic of the night. Here all was peaceful, and he was happy. As yet he felt full of far-off places, of fear-ridden faces and gutted houses and anguished cries in the Italian nights. But this street was familiar; he knew it well; it was like part of himself. It was good to be home. His happiness ebbed and surged in his rushing blood.

"It's awfully late. Really it is awfully late," the girl beside him said, "and everyone seems to have gone to bed, because there isn't a light on in the house. And anyway," she continued, defiantly apologetic, "the company must bore you. You've been sitting there with your eyes shut."

Her low laugh stirred Paul from his reverie. He laughed, too. She was staring out the window of the car. He followed her gaze to the upper story of a brick duplex home, remarkable only in that it so strikingly resembled the other houses along the street. Paul leaned over and kissed the white lustrous skin below the carefully groomed upswept hair, relaxed but tense, awaiting the next fateful ticking of his heart when she would turn and bend into his arms.

"No." Her voice was petulant, disapproving, cold. She glanced quickly into the back seat.

II

One summer evening in Florence, long before, it had all been so simple. The streets of the old Italian city had flashed with color as throngs of people sauntered about enjoying the evening promenade. Paul leaned against a building facing the Piazza della Signoria, and watched the matter-of-fact populace pass up and down, indifferent to the sculptured marvels grouped under the portico which led down to the Arno. The heat of the summer day had relented into a hazy warmth. Paul eyed the barelegged Italian women, ambling by in twos and threes, indifferent to his presence. Then a girl walked by, alone. Paul watched her cross the square, and on a sudden impulse he followed her. When she reached the river, she stopped at the waist-high wall. Below children were playing in the muddy waters of the sluggish river. To the right lights twinkled on the Pontevecchio. Paul paused beside the girl, studying her. Coils of dark hair hung to her shoulders. Her bare olive-skinned arms and legs were firmly rounded. Paul moved next to her and extended his cigarette case. She shook her head, but did not move away—and from then it went easily. They halted an old Italian indolently urging along a horse-drawn carriage. After they drove across the old bridge, the creaking hack wound its way up the hillside until it paused at a small cafe. The driver dismissed, Paul and the girl drank iced vermouths and watched the blobs of light that were Florence stretching below. Later they walked arm in arm down the hushed winding road. By a grassy cove Paul tugged the girl close and tasted her vibrant lips. He pulled her down on the cool grass. And the central hunger of life was that simple in the summer twilight of the Italian hills.

The back seat was another world, Hank and Dottie close together, absorbed, their voices blending in a subdued murmur.

"Yeah," said Paul, "yeah. Well, okay." He settled back behind the

MATCH THE PIECES

wheel. "Let's have a smoke, and you'll go right up, huh? That all right, Helen?"

Helen busied herself with her handbag. "Well, I'll be looking for my key." She shook her head at his proffered cigarette.

"Cigarette, Hank?" Paul called without turning. "Dottie?"

"Hnn," came a muffled voice. "No, thanks, Paul. Got some back here. Thanks."

III

A week ago Paul had come home from the separation center, striped and bemedaled, triumphant. A curious loneliness such as he had never experienced in his long months overseas descended on him, and in desperation he had telephoned his old friend, Hank Talbert.

"What's on, Hank?" Paul asked after the preliminary greetings had been exchanged. "The family's used to me already, so I can break away for some cutting up. How're the squaws up at the rat races?"

The enthusiasm in Hank's voice about Paul's arrival moderated. "Well . . ."

"What's the matter, Hank, your arteries hardening?" Paul laughed, but hollowly despite himself.

"No, I still do my pushups, but a lot of kids have taken over the old spots, and I've sorta been seeing Dottie Mason since I've been back." Hank's voice over the phone softened. "She was just a kid when we left in '41, Paul—but then we've been away a long time."

He sounds embarrassed, thought Paul. "Oh, sure, I remember her. If you've got a date, I'll—"

"Say, listen now, Paul," Hank interrupted hastily. "Come along with us, just for a show and some beers afterwards."

There was a long minute of silence while neither knew what to say.

The obvious solution finally came from Hank. "Maybe Dottie's

AMERICAN VANGUARD

got a friend," he said. "Why, certainly she must have. Listen, Paul, I'll call Dottie and fix everything up."

Paul chuckled, relieved, but he did not wish to sound too anxious. "Well, if it's a dud," he relented enough to say, "you and I have lots to talk over anyway, so . . . I'll pick you up in my car." Paul, replacing the receiver, wondered why the conversation had seemed so flat, but his loneliness had vanished, leaving only an aching pinpoint in his chest.

•

Paul sullenly lit his cigarette. He watched the narrowing end of the street. A car turned in from Bagley Avenue, and its headlights bore down on them until it turned several houses away and entered a driveway. "That's Mr. Dwyer. He works nights down at the paper," Helen said irrelevantly. Paul grunted in reply.

Her hand was on his arm. "Oh, stop sulking, Paul." She leaned toward him. Her sharp perfume cut into his nostrils. "Are you mad at someone, maybe me?" she asked unbelievably, as one questions a child. Her fingers found his, and she squeezed his hand. "May I have a cigarette now, please?" There was a teasing warmth in her voice.

Paul smiled, his tension easing. Helen moved away and leaned back against the cushioned seat. Paul watched her, studying her face illumined by the wan yellowing glow of the street light. The curious phenomenon of a woman's face in shadow intrigued him anew. He wanted to take her face in his hands and turn it slowly in the indistinct flickering light, creating shadows and angles and new impressions with her fine even features. And finally, to kiss her, hungrily and long.

IV

The evening had not gone well. After the movie they had trooped expectantly into the Adeen Cafe. A juke box blared near their corner booth.

"When we were inducted, the jive mill there was blasting away with 'Somebody Else Is Taking My Place,' " Paul commented with-

MATCH THE PIECES

out humor. "Now what are we getting—'It's Been a Long Long Time.'"

His observation drew laughs from the others. Paul frowned.

"Excuse us, kiddies. We're off to the little girlies' room." There was a flash of sheer hose as the girls rose to their feet; they did an imitation of a small child's curtsy, and strode away, proud and self-sufficient in their lithe beauty.

Paul looked at Hank quizzically. "What's the story with this babe Helen, I wonder. She's a good-looking dish, but what gives?"

Hank eyed Paul gravely. "Paul, I've been back for several months, and I know now this is the same old U.S.A., not England or Africa or Italy or France or anywhere over there. All this talk of our having to readjust ourselves is the bunk, of course, but at the same time there are things you forget if you've been away a long time. And with you it's been three years—three years, wasn't it?"

Paul shrugged off the question. "I don't follow you, Hank. What are you driving at?"

"Let me put it this way, Paul. It's the same old story here it always was and always will be—that is, with girls like Dottie and Helen. If you want to get to first base, you have to start way out in left field. Remember that if you want to make any passes."

Paul's eyes wandered past Hank. "Here come the gals now," he said.

The talk at the table was cheerfully frivolous. Hank did tricks with a beer glass, and Helen and Dottie told jokes in spurious dialects to which evident repetition had lent a certain facility. Later, Señor Bobo, town character who made a living mooching from cafe to cafe and bar to bar, strolled in, floppy and seedy as always, and they all joined in singing old favorites to the accompaniment of Señor Bobo's cracked accordion.

Down by the old mill stream, where I first met you . . .¹

Paul's voice quavered and cracked on a high note, and he felt the years fade away as everyone laughed until the tears rolled. Still, in

¹ Reprinted by permission.

the midst of the good, familiar merriment, Paul found himself detached from the group. He tried to cast off such alien thoughts, but the sense of standing apart and observing the others and even himself came creeping back. This is what I've been waiting for, he thought, but oh, God, why must I have this awful feeling?

Then Señor Bobo had wandered off into the night. While the others talked, Paul listened, sucking nervously on a succession of cigarettes. He gathered that Kitty Dodson had secured a good job with the West and Price law firm; that Carl Berani was still in the hospital after drunk-driving his car into a tree up on Mitchell Boulevard; that Mildred Greyman, Old-Man-Greyman-who-owned-the-filling-station's niece, had eloped with a sailor she met at the USO; that Harold Fenton was sure to be the new president of the council; that John Simms, that Carol Cluddy, that Roberta Moss, that, that, that . . . Names, all blurred in Paul's memory. He tried to find faces to go with the familiar ring of names like "Carl Berani," but couldn't match the pieces in the jigsaw puzzle of his memory. Yes, he recalled Old Man Greyman, but how old was this niece of his when he, Paul, left for the service—fourteen, maybe fifteen?

"Tommy and Marva Wakemore are buying the old Kirk home out in Bentwood," Helen was saying. Paul remembered Tommy. Tommy had played tackle on the high school football team the year Paul was the second-string center.

"How come Tommy's in the chips?" Paul interposed. "He was clerking down at the bank when I left."

"Oh, *he* wasn't away. He opened up an insurance office and is doing *very* well." Helen stared blankly at Paul. He left her eyes to look at Dottie, then at Hank. Their faces were the same. A sudden rush of anger assailed him.

"W-a-i-t! Wait now, wait a minute," he blurted out. "You don't think I was over there all this time because I wanted to be there, do you? You don't think I . . ." He checked himself abruptly, realizing the absurdity of his words. "Excuse me a minute." He pushed himself away from the table and walked back to the bar.

He downed a drink and was hunched over the bar, studying his

MATCH THE PIECES

second glass, when Hank came up behind him, and placed a hand on Paul's shoulder. Hank might have been speaking to himself, for he stood with his back to the bar and looked away from Paul.

"I came home seven or eight months ago, and I still get mad when people say things thoughtlessly. But that's it—nothing malicious, just thoughtless, and I don't let it worry me. Not everything or everyone came out even in the big shindig. Hell, we left plenty of fellows over there who won't be back at all. And we're the lucky ones. It may not seem that way sometimes, but we are."

Paul let the words sink in, glad that Hank had followed and spoken to him, ashamed now of his quick temper. They rejoined the table. The girls made an obvious pretense that nothing had occurred.

V

Helen flicked her cigarette from the window. It landed on the narrow strip of grass between sidewalk and curb, glowed fiercely for a moment, then vanished as it absorbed the dew of the glistening grass. With that, she turned to Paul with a questioning, impatient expression in her pert face. Paul knew she would not open the door herself, would not leave until he had walked around the car and himself opened the door. A resentment toward her that he could not explain caused him to take several lingering puffs from his cigarette, before he opened his door.

On the sidewalk she said softly, "Oh, darn it."

"What's the matter?" Paul asked disinterestedly.

"I didn't bring the key, after all. This is the key to my office." She gazed at the darkened house. "And the folks are all sleeping, I'm sure." She stamped her foot impatiently.

They walked up the long driveway toward the back of the house. Perhaps, Helen had said, her mother had discovered the missing key and left the back door unlocked. She walked ahead of him, insensible to his presence. Paul felt unwanted, out of place, wanting to turn on his heel, hasten to his car and drive away, but he feared to

AMERICAN VANGUARD

appear blunt, and moreover wished somehow to break through her cool façade of disdain, to find something cutting, wounding, to say before he left. The aroma of lilacs flowering behind the tall hedge bordering the driveway satiated the night air, engulfing Paul as might the tepid waters of a placid pool, then escaping to the velvet curtain of sky, dotted now with curiously quivering stars.

They reached the back stairs. Helen's high heels clattered on the steps.

"The door's open. Oh, I'm glad. Gosh, Dad would have been furious if I had to wake him up." She giggled, looking down at Paul. She was but an outline in the dark.

Safe now in the comfort of the open door, she slowly felt her way down the porch steps. "Thanks for a lovely evening, Paul. I really had a nice time."

These the formalities, Paul thought, the pretty prefabricated speech, the kiss-my-glove manner in the way she extended her hand. Yeah, the evening's over all right. His thoughts ran together, blurred.

He stepped in, and running his hands behind her shoulders, drew her close. For a brief moment she was soft and yielding. But when he bent to kiss her, she pushed away, wheeled, and was gone, running lightly up the stairs.

"Good-night," she called back pleasantly, and Paul heard the restrained click of the back door. He had an instant of slight nausea, as he felt his stomach and the muscles in his cheeks form into tight knots. He quickly lit a cigarette, looked up at the dark house, and walked rapidly down the driveway.

He was already behind the wheel and had kicked the starter, before he realized Hank and Dottie had moved up into the front seat. He did not want to look at them. He drove rapidly down the street and turned into the avenue before anyone spoke.

"Do you like Helen?" asked Dottie. Her long blond hair rested on Hank's shoulder.

"Sure," Paul answered hurriedly. "Sure, she's a—well, she's a nice girl."

MATCH THE PIECES

"Oh, she is," said Dottie, picking her phrases. "We've been friends for a long time. She's a wonderful person. And I'm glad you liked her." She brushed her lips against Hank's cheek. "She's a wonderful person," she repeated mildly without meaning.

Then, her voice barely audible from Hank's collar: "Did you kiss her good-night?"

A shell flared and burst in Paul's mind. "Are you kidding?" He laughed sardonically. "Are you kidding?" he blustered again. "Say, that's college-boy stuff. Look, Dottie dear, I've been overseas a long, long time. The gals there, why, they start where the kissing games here leave off. They—" I'm driveling, thought Paul. I'm rattling along like a Model T. He felt foolish. More shells, flaring and bursting.

"Here's your street now, Dottie," said Hank. Paul waited long minutes while Hank saw Dottie to her door. He'd have to ask Hank more questions. He felt very confused.

The Substance in the Depth

A SKETCH BY JACK SEGAL

UNDER the sun, moving gently in the passing breeze, the leaves were full-to-bursting. So full of substance in the deep greenness. And hard to the twig stuck through stem into the bough. So often he pulled one down and broke it off and laid it on his tongue and caressed the roof of his mouth with it. So seldom he did not crush it or bite it and suck and swallow. And blades of grass . . . the tender roots not yet green, not yet come up to the sun. He tasted never bitterness from these, and the pine needles stuck through his teeth first.

She is turgid like the leaf and the grass and the pine needle. All her substance surges out to the edges reluctant to be bounded. Throbs and waves never spent pulsing out. It yields to his fingers softness in softness out gently resisting. Always his fingers rebound—ever-called to reconquer. His lips tingle near her nearness. Tingle too much to bring more to them soon. (He who has the thirst tells himself not to drink too quickly the live water.) What burns inside must wait and be ready, for she is neither the leaf nor the grass root nor the pine needle.

And each part of him swells beneath her hand or the mere suggestion of its motion. So often wrong what he thinks her hand must do, but it is always right when she touches.

This thing moves and moves. It moves in the wind and trembles. It looks to the sun and reaches out to it.

He scratches at the earth and takes soil in his hands, and after a

SUBSTANCE IN THE DEPTH

while he lets it sift through his fingers. It moves through his fingers and is lost in the wholeness and the motion. . . . And the sun and the wind with the green thing turgid and the earth are in rhythm: strong, wild, free, instantly changing, constantly new, one rhythm and two.

It is on his tongue. His tongue on the surface of it, insistent, divining the depth and the substance in the depth. Teeth pressed, and, like his hand, rebound gently from its fullness. Into the waiting open where the palate has not been caressed. The bite and the pull and the suck and the swallow. There is a flutter in the new rhythm blended back of the one rhythm and the two. The fourth is the giant sound of the roar of water in the stillness.

. . . .sssss shhhh sssss oobah oobah oobah oobah oowahhh—oh gg oh gg oh gg—rr dll a bee rr dll a bee rr dll a bee—ow de kk ow de kk ow de kk—sssss shhhh sssss ahhh. . . .

The substance flows through his bite and pull and suck and swallow to away. The spring over the rapids to flow to flow.

To the earth plowed, the seed demands to send out roots deep. And the thing which needs the sun again rises to the sun and reaches too. Both stir the fullness and are alive in it. And the sounds in the stillness grow louder surging together and then together with the rest.

The fullness stirred—a thousand pebbles splash in the pool—and the waves move to all the shores—gentle, rippling fingers stroke the arid sand. Always the caress and the return to the center. Always the giving and the going and the returning and the giving the going the returning giving going returning.

The taste now, the moment of substance through all the open—bud to roots to bud. All the tastes now—the deep greenness and the young roots' tender sweetness—the prick of the pine needle in the piercing sweetness all deep in the taste with the earth and the moving water.

They faint with it. It has swelled out and back, and some has gone to the blood, stirring it with new flow, throbbing to the blood, ex-

AMERICAN VANGUARD

citing the flow and making whirls and swirls. And back from the blood and back to the blood.

Still the taste lingers, retasted again and again and again.

Her eyes are open now, and he sees the water sun-drenched, and beneath, the cool greenness, the deepest green, and everything growing still in the depths over the earth beneath, beneath all.

Kalman Thought of Tomorrow

A SHORT STORY BY FRANK SPIRO

KALMAN was still very young. He resented being very young. He knew that his mother was a good mother, but he resented having to live with her. She cooked his meals and made his bed when he left for the office early in the morning, so that it would look clean and fresh when he returned.

Kalman was a clerk in a small insurance office. He filed cards in their proper places in the correct drawers. First he would alphabetize them, and then he would put them into the drawers. He was a very quiet man who did his work well. Kalman took special pride in knowing the names of all the clients. They went from *Aaronson* to *Zumba*. *Aaronson* was a Jew, and *Zumba* a Negro. Mr. *Zumba* had been in the office once. He was a very black man, a lawyer. Kalman had tried to picture him as a feather-clad Senegalese chieftain, but he had heard him speaking to the receptionist, and he spoke with a tight-lipped West Indian accent and was very austere. Still Kalman thought of Mr. *Zumba* as his friend, as he considered all the other names. They had to be his friends, or Kalman would have been very unhappy with his job.

There were two stenographers working in the office. One was Miss Katz, the other Miss Larsen. Miss Katz had large liquid eyes, and always looked as though she were about to cry. Her heavy breasts rippled as she walked. When she sat down, her buttocks would spread softly over the hard flat surface of her chair. Miss Katz did not work very hard, but she read a lot of books and always brought a novel to work with her. Once she had used her book as a paperweight, and the boss had come over and asked her how she liked it. She had replied that she "liked it fine," and the boss had smiled at her and told her to keep on reading.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

Kalman often felt very bad about not liking Miss Katz. She was really very nice. Then, of course, Kalman was Jewish, too, and being Jewish and not liking Miss Katz just didn't seem right. However, Kalman couldn't help liking Miss Larsen.

Miss Larsen was tiny and blond. She had no breasts, but her legs were good. She lived in Newark, but always got to the office before Miss Katz. Her walk was brisk and her eyes alive, but she rarely paid any attention to either Kalman or Miss Katz. Even when the boss wanted her, she would make him wait until she had finished whatever she was doing. Kalman thought that Miss Larsen was smart and "on the ball"; he admired her with an intensity which he thought was evil. At times he thought that he was in love with her, but whenever he started thinking *that*, he would go into the hall and light a cigarette, which he would not finish.

II

Kalman didn't go out with girls very often. Occasionally one of his friends from the neighborhood would arrange a date with one, but he didn't like the idea of going out on blind dates; he would accept only under vehement protest. His mother often badgered him about this. When he did go out, she would wait up all night until he got home, and then she would ask him whether he liked the girl, what they had done, and whether he had kissed her. She would remind him that he was the only one she had since Poppa had died, and that she wanted to see him have children so that she could watch them grow up into healthy young boys and girls. Kalman sometimes disregarded her when she said these things, but he usually would become enraged and accuse her of being a "kike with old-fashioned ideas" and taunt her because she still spoke with an accent. Then, on the following morning, he would rise early, flooded with shame and fear of his mother's eyes, dress and sneak past her bed into the hall and to the door. He would open the door quietly, step into the corridor, close the door, and race through the lobby into the street. There he would rub his eyes, breathe deeply,

KALMAN THOUGHT OF TOMORROW

and look back at the apartment house. He would next walk either to the nearby playground or to a friend's house, thinking about his mother, about all the things she had done for him. He thought about the time he had been drafted, when he didn't want to leave, and how he had laid his head on her shoulder and cried for an hour, despite the fact that he was excited by the prospect of entering the Army and thereby becoming an adult. While walking, Kalman would think about how much he loved his mother and how afraid he had become of letting her see how he felt. When he finally went home at noon, she would have his lunch ready. There would be fresh rye bread and lox and sour cream. Then Kalman would go back to his friend's house, and they would play cards until it was time for dinner and the radio programs.

III

On Monday morning Kalman left the house in unusually good spirits. He had gone fishing on the previous day, and had come home with a good catch. His mother had been proud and had invited all the housewives from the first floor in to take their pick of the fish that she did not want. The women praised his mother for having a wonderful son, and one of them, on leaving with her two porgies carefully wrapped in newspaper, glanced at her and then at Kalman, and wrinkling her nose, had said: "Uch, such a *feine yingel*. My son should be so good to *his* mother."

It had been a good week-end, and now on this Monday morning Kalman looked forward to going to the office and doing his work. He was going to be cheerful, he was going to work hard, and suddenly the thought occurred to him that he might even stop somewhere for a drink before checking in. He bought a newspaper at the corner stand, folded it, and walked quickly towards the subway station. He felt the hot yellow of the new summer day press gently against his cheek, and the red brick of the houses and the deep green of the August maple leaves were new and fresh and made his breath come quickly.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

Once on the train, he managed to squeeze through the crowd and obtain a seat. Looking around him, he realized that the surrounding faces, ties, shirts, and light dresses bore more vivid colors and expressions than they had in a long time. A multicolored bow tie and a young girl's happy face as she spoke with a friend seemed to have a gay significance. They projected a pleasant warmth into Kalman's mind, and he was conscious of it, and he smiled. He spent the rest of the trip reading his paper and appreciating the shoulder of the man beside him which touched his arm as the train swayed back and forth.

In Manhattan, as he walked to the office, Kalman passed a bar. He hesitated. He had thought of having a drink. It was a dare. It was a chance. He glanced at his watch. It was still early. He took a step towards the entrance and then stopped. Another glance at his watch, and he shrugged his shoulders, laughing at himself, and went in. He called for a beer. When it was placed before him and he had paid for it, he sat over it and watched the foam slowly descend. He felt fine; he felt strong. He picked up the glass, gripping it as tightly as he was able, and drank in huge gulps. He quietly asked the bartender for the time, and making believe that he was adjusting his watch, he hurried out of the tavern and to the office building.

IV

Miss Larsen was already there when Kalman arrived. At first he had not noticed her. He had been struck rather by the sharp outlines of the desks and cabinets and chairs. The sun of the bright morning was sliding between the slanted blinds in swirling clusters of motes, and the atmosphere was infused with expectation.

Kalman had begun to feel heady, but when he saw Miss Larsen, he was immediately sure that everything was all right. Her hair was very light and was drawn tightly behind her head, held there by a light blue bow. Her skin was brown from a week-end at the beach, her quick blue eyes as active as ever. Kalman broke into a smile and walked over to where she was tidying her desk. He would be bold.

KALMAN THOUGHT OF TOMORROW

"Good morning, Betty." He had only called her Betty once before. "Can I help you out somehow?" He waited impatiently for her to look up and answer. When she did, it was with a smile, but she didn't need any help. "That's very nice of you, anyway, Kalman," she said.

But I want to help you, he thought. I feel good, and I want to do something. He was hurt a trifle, but his now increased desire to reach her warmed him even further, and he knew that he would not stop. "But I haven't got anything to do, and nobody's here. . . ." He had said it just right, and he knew that he had said it just right. She answered that she was all finished. There was a moment of quiet, and only the fans could be heard, but they were looking at one another, and both unconsciously perceived a fleeting passage of understanding between one another.

She finally smiled, and Kalman saw how wonderfully white her teeth were. "Well, let's go downstairs and have a cup of coffee," she said. "What are we standing here for?"

When she said that, Kalman checked himself. He was certain that he wanted to lift Miss Larsen from her feet and carry her to the elevator. But he walked slowly behind her, looking at the bright blond hair and wanting to touch it.

They said nothing to one another until they were seated at the fountain of the snack shop. They ordered their coffee, and then Miss Larsen began talking about the office. She told Kalman that it was a good job, but that she would have preferred to work in Newark because it was so much closer to home. They then spoke of the clients, and they laughed over the funny ones, and they grumbled over the eccentrics who always wanted special forms filled out. Kalman told her about his fishing trip and about the biggest fish he caught, and Betty Larsen's eyes grew wide with interest, and her face came close to his. A few moments later Kalman felt both flattered and embarrassed when she looked at him over the lip of her coffee cup with her live live eyes and winked. He found himself unable to say anything, and was relieved when, upon finishing, she said, "Well, let's get back."

AMERICAN VANGUARD

The morning raced by, and the hours were good ones. Kalman spent much of his time watching Miss Larsen as she scurried about the office. He got very little done, but he did not care about his work. For the first time since he began work at the insurance office, he noticed how it became flooded with light as noon approached, and how it illuminated Miss Larsen's hair and deepened the tan of her summer bronze. He answered Miss Katz's polite but carefully reserved requests for cards and policy forms with grunts and nods, but he rarely looked at her. It was Miss Larsen, Miss Larsen, Betty Larsen. In a night club, a restaurant booth, the Staten Island Ferry. It was Betty Larsen on a soft couch somewhere, knowing him, their faces close together.

At one o'clock they left for lunch together. Miss Katz seemed surprised, but Kalman didn't care. They went to a small cafeteria, and while they ate their knees touched beneath the table. Betty smiled, but Kalman, who was speaking, had to stop for a moment and shiver. Betty asked, "Are you cold?" and Kalman answered, "Yes, it's the damn air conditioning," and neither said anything for a long time after that.

V

At five minutes past five Miss Katz patted Kalman on the back and said, "Nighty night, Kalman." She then bustled out of the office with her novel obtrusively placed under her arm. Betty looked up, and Kalman walked over to her and smiled. Miss Katz had bothered him, and he found it difficult to ask, "How about having dinner?" He was feeling hot and damp, and he knew that he was breathing heavily and probably blushing.

She paused and seemed a little startled. She ran her hand back over her beautiful hair and said, "Well, gee, I guess I'll have to call home and let them know." When she had said that, she seemed more at ease, and she winked at him, as she had over the coffee cup that morning. Then she went to call and Kalman sat down to wait for her.

KALMAN THOUGHT OF TOMORROW

She was calling her home. It would be right for him to call, too. But why did he have to call? His life was his own. He was twenty-one. He had been in the service and overseas. He could handle himself. What did his mother expect of him? His business was his business, and that was all there was to it. He knew that he was strong. What did he care! Mother would wait and worry. He knew that she would. But let her. All mothers have to learn. Kalman turned his thoughts to Betty, at the phone, calling her parents, but still in the back of his mind loomed the thought of Momma with the evening meal prepared, not knowing where he was.

They went to an expensive restaurant on 79th Street. Kalman told Betty to order anything she wanted. She smiled and said softly, "Don't worry, honey." This made Kalman feel good, really good. He wanted to take her hand and hold it tightly. He thought of asking her if it would be all right, but then decided that this would make him seem foolish. Instead he began to talk about the Dodgers and the last time he had been to the zoo and about the one time that he had gone horseback riding. He even started to mention home and his mother, but here he stopped short. Betty said that he seemed tense, and Kalman asked her, "How do you know that I'm tense?" She answered with a grin, "I know you like a book already." Kalman was pleased and was smiling at her when the waiter came over.

On the bus going down to 34th Street, Kalman began to think about getting home. He knew that he was wishing that the bus would go faster and that there would be fewer red lights and less traffic. It had already begun to get dark, and Kalman was afraid of getting home late.

VI

Betty said that she could get home all right alone. Kalman said that he really didn't mind taking her home, but she insisted on taking the tube herself. When he had said good-bye, he bought a newspaper and got on the subway. In his seat he found that he was unable to read and could only beg the train for more speed, more

AMERICAN VANGUARD

speed. His mother was in the house, nervous and unhappy, not knowing where he was and not understanding what had happened. Should he tell her, tell her that he had had dinner with a girl named Betty Larsen—Larsen.

After he had unlocked the door and quickly stepped into the apartment, he found his mother in the living room. She was sitting there in the dark, crying. When she heard him, she ran over to him and in sobbing gasps of Yiddish and English asked him where he had been and why he had not called, and wept that she had telephoned the police, thinking that something terrible had befallen him. He stood there, his arm around her shoulder, contrite and stricken with self-resentment. His mother cried out that he was her only one, the only thing she lived and hoped for on this earth, and she asked him why he was so unkind to her. He stroked her hair until she had calmed herself, and then she kissed him on the cheek and muttered, "*Mein kind, mein kind*, you will never do that to me again? Please tell me that you never will."

Kalman suddenly was filled with terror, and he wanted to run or stamp his feet or cry. The tears came easily into his eyes, and as he felt one run down his cheek, cold and salty, into the corner of his mouth, he said, "No, Momma, I'll never do that again."

As he and his mother walked back into the kitchen, where they would sit, and she would tell him about her day, Kalman thought about tomorrow. Perhaps he would ask Miss Katz to lunch with him. They could meet at a little cafeteria three blocks from the office where no one would see them.

Happy Sunday

A SKETCH BY PHILIP KARANT

SILKEN and smooth, the covers caressed Harry Alman's skin as he dug deeper into the bed, snuggling under the down-filled comforter to hide from the rays of early morning—thus in the warmth, softness and darkness finding respite from weekday cares.

It was Sunday. In a wonderful torpor, neither awake nor asleep, Harry reveled. No work today. Free to do as he pleased. Free to loaf and eat and read and invite his soul. . . .

When a fretful "Are you getting up or are you parked for the day?" obtruded upon these luxurious meditations.

No one is ever truly free.

The voice sounded close. Envisaging his wife Lottie's thin face over him like a hovering menace, Harry shut his eyes more tightly and burrowed his head under the pillow. A rude tug on the coverings curtailed all further attempts to play dead.

"I'll be right up, dear," Harry mumbled, opening his eyes.

Pulling the pillow away from under him, his wife replied, "Don't be all day about it."

Arising, Harry slid out of the bed on the side opposite her, almost as though he feared physical attack. His pajamas had worked themselves down below his hips. In an endeavor to adjust them he clumsily fumbled with the string as he shuffled toward the bathroom.

"Lift your feet," his wife called after him.

Harry made no effort either to comply or to answer her. Too early in the morning to do either. Bathroom like bed offered sanctuary. With the door shut behind him, he once again felt secure.

In accordance with matutinal custom, Harry subjected his globular face to a careful survey in the bathroom mirror. A cluster of

AMERICAN VANGUARD

blackheads on the side of his nose caught his eye. Ugly things. He squeezed them between his fingers, making a satisfied little grunt as they popped. Regarding the cratered red welt left by the operation with distaste, Harry pondered the frequency with which beauty is sacrificed for hygiene. The thought lingered as he proceeded with other purging and cleansing processes. Withal, Harry was happy. . . .

Until Lottie's voice again intruded. This time accompanied by a sharp rap on the door.

"Have you drowned?"

"No, dear."

"Then how about letting someone else in?"

"I'll be right out, dear," Harry placated. After a final check in the mirror he opened the door.

His wife tried to brush past him so hurriedly that for a moment they were both jammed in the doorway.

Ever the philosopher, Harry said, "A stitch in time saves nine."

"Nineteen pounds of fat off you," Lottie snarled, "and two people might be able to live in this rat trap."

The door slammed shut before he could conjure an appropriate rejoinder.

"Always picking on me," Harry sulked as he headed for the easy chair in the living room, the most comfortable chair in the house—Harry's special chair. On the way over he snatched several bananas from the icebox.

Immersing himself in the *Sunday Times*, Harry contentedly munched his bananas. Seated in a comfortable chair, fortified with food, reading, Harry found peace. He was a person of simple tastes. No chicken-with-its-head-cut-off dashing around for him. No stomach ulcers.

"Harry," his wife interrupted, coming into the living room.

He dropped the newspaper in disgust.

"What now?" he asked.

"How many times do I have to tell you the ash tray isn't a garbage pail?"

HAPPY SUNDAY

With an expression that seemed remarkably like that of a disgruntled house dog, Harry arose to dispose of the banana peels.

"You might as well save yourself another trip by getting the one you dropped under the chair."

Beginning to feel very much abused, Harry picked up the banana peel.

When he returned from the kitchen his wife asked brightly, "Where are we going today?"

Regarding her apprehensively, Harry asked, "Can't we stay home?"

"On a lovely day like this? Nothing doing."

Harry sighed unhappily. This was how trouble usually started. Lottie wanted to go places, do things. He wanted to rest. At forty a fellow was entitled to a rest. His wife was as old as he. Yet with each birthday she became more desperately youthful.

"Why don't you relax and act your age?" Harry asked.

"What did you say?"

Harry backtracked. "I don't see why we pay rent. We're never at home."

"We're at home too much."

In a desperate effort to save the day Harry said, "I've got work to do."

"You've always got an excuse," she accused. "You never think of me."

Harry hummed—"I've heard that song before.

"You never think of me," she reiterated.

Harry waved his hand. "Aw, stop your yapping."

"I won't stop," she said, belligerently thrusting her head forward. "You're a selfish rat."

"But this is Sunday."

"And one day you're not going to spoil for me," Lottie snapped. Grown taut with anger, she seemed about to fly at him.

When Lottie got this way, Harry knew from past experience the futility of further resistance.

Resigned, he asked, "Where do you want to go?"

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"Swimming."

"Isn't it too cold?"

"We can swim indoors at the St. George."

"Okay," he grudgingly acquiesced. "Let's go."

"Don't sound like such a martyr."

Slumped dejectedly on the stone bench alongside the pool, his paunch bulging obscenely over the tightened drawstring of his trunks, Harry looked as middle-aged as he felt. Bodies, flabby, swollen, and varicose-mottled like his, spindly and spinsterish like Lottie's, had no place in swimming pools. He hated swimming. He hated the noise and movement, the yelling youngsters, the splashing divers. He hated Lottie for having made him come.

"Aren't you going in any more?" his wife asked.

Harry shook his head. He was blue with cold. His eyes were blood-shot. His nose and throat still smarted from the heavily chlorinated water. Unused to exercise, he felt nauseous, his head ached.

His wife regarded him venomously. "What's the matter now? You've just come."

"My head hurts," Harry said, utterly wretched. "Water always makes me sick."

"You mean anything that pleases me makes you sick."

"You know it isn't so."

"I know it is so," Lottie responded in a whining, petulant sing-song. "Anything that pleases me makes you sick."

Harry flared furiously, "Why don't you marinate that refrain? It's getting stale." Observing a youngster grinning at them from the side of the pool, Harry said threateningly, "What the hell do you think so goddam funny?"

Momentarily transformed by anger from a caricature to a man, from a puffy, shambling ineffectual to a purposeful being, Harry recaptured a dominance he had long past yielded to his wife.

"All right, lousy," Lottie said bitterly, "you've spoiled my fun again. Go get dressed."

HAPPY SUNDAY

They sat in the subway train, rigid and mute. Harry's nausea had passed, but his head still throbbed painfully. Lottie smouldered.

Finally she broke the silence. "Since you're not able to swim, we can go to Central Park."

Ignoring her, Harry stared moodily at the advertisement directly facing him—

For that tired feeling—

DRINK *Vigorlene*

Lottie poked him with her elbow. "Are you deaf?"

Harry glared malevolently at her. "I'm not going to any park. I told you my head hurts."

"How convenient, your headaches."

Harry made no reply.

Lottie again thrust her elbow into his side. "This is one day you're not going to spoil for me. Whether you like it or not, you're going to the park."

"Like hell I am."

The train stopped at the East 33rd Street Station. Harry got up to leave. Lottie tugged at his shirt, a green-and-white-striped, sporty-looking affair, quite dazzling to the eye.

"Where do you think you're going?" she asked.

"Home." He lunged forward as the door started to slam shut.

His shirt still clutched in her hand, she followed. She still had hold of it when they got to the street level.

Several passersby shot amused glances at them. Afraid of making a scene, he controlled a growing impulse to strike her. East 33rd Street is quite deserted on a Sunday. Soon there was no one in close proximity. Regarding her as she still clutched his shirt, he gritted his teeth and clenched his fists.

"Lay off." He tried to make himself sound cold and menacing but only succeeded in being shrill. "Lay off, I warn you."

"You're going to the park," she insisted.

He took another quick look up and down the street. There was no one around. He twisted her wrist.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"You contemptible coward," she shrieked. She sunk her teeth into his hand.

"You're hurting me," he howled.

She glared at him. "I'll hurt you. Are you going to the park?"

"Not on your life."

He tried to pull away from her. His shirt started to rip.

"Let go of my shirt. You'll tear it."

"You're coming to the park with me," she insisted.

In an effort to get away from her, he continued to tug. The shirt ripped.

"My beautiful shirt," he moaned. "I just bought it."

She grabbed hold of his hair. He freed himself and ran. She chased him. A policeman regarded them curiously.

Harry's legs being much longer than his wife's, he soon outdistanced her. He arrived at the apartment badly winded. His head throbbed worse than ever with pain. Rapidly removing his clothing, Harry got into bed.

Lottie arrived soon after, pale and puffing.

"Get out of bed," she said.

"I'm sick," Harry moaned. "Lay off me. You've done enough damage."

"You're going to the park with me. You're not going to spoil my Sunday."

"Park—I'm not going to any park." He tried to shut her out by closing his eyes and pulling the bed covers over his head.

She ripped the bed covers off him, exposing his hairy body. "Either you go to the park," she threatened, "or I'll tear every hair off you."

"Lay off me," he begged. He tried to retrieve the bed covers.

She plucked the hair on his chest.

Harry's head ached so he could hardly see. Why did she insist on tormenting him? If he socked her, she might let him alone. He felt ashamed. Wife beater. What would the neighbors think.

Lottie continued to pluck the hair on his chest. More irritating

HAPPY SUNDAY

than painful, it worked him into a rage. She had spoiled his day. She always nagged him, never left him alone.

Smashing her hand aside, Harry sprang out of bed. He grabbed Lottie by the hair and dragged her toward the bathroom. She bit and clawed at him furiously, but his superior weight prevailed. He shut the door. The neighbors might not hear her screams. She kicked him in the shin. It opened the skin, leaving a purple bruise. He was afraid of leaving marks on her. What would people say.

Using his hand as a knife, he hit her in the jugular. She sank to her knees.

"You coward, you rotten lousy coward," she wept.

Always calling him names. His rage mounted. With his hand open like a knife again he hit her, this time in the larynx. Once and for all, Lottie had to be silenced.

She gasped as the blow landed, collapsing. The blueness of her face frightened him. If he continued his attacks, he might kill her. Turning about, Harry left her on the floor of the bathroom moaning, "You coward, you miserable bullying coward."

Week-End

A SHORT STORY BY REBECCA BOORSTEIN

EACH little trip from bathroom to bedroom and back expressed her disapproval. She jerked the suitcase from under the bed and slapped it down on the chenille spread and folded into it with deliberate pats a pink rayon slip, a black jersey silk dress, a change of pants and stockings, and each movement was jerky with a significant finality.

"For God's sake, Louise," Bebbi cried out, "go ahead and get it off your chest. Go ahead and tell me what a damn fool I am."

For a moment it looked as if she were going to follow instructions faithfully, but instead she shrugged her shoulders wearily and sat down at the dressing table to make up her face. For she was a fine one to talk. She was a fine one to say, now look here, Bebbi, you're making a mistake. Bebbi would look at her with her hard innocent eyes and set that delicate jaw of hers with the blind bulldog stubbornness of a child; she would listen very politely without hearing a word, and she would answer very politely without once bringing up . . .

Louise sighed, wiping off the cold cream and scanning her face absent-mindedly for blackheads. She sighed because Bebbi was so young, so very young, she sighed because Bebbi was afflicted with shining ideals, she sighed because this planned week-end, to her so sordidly matter-of-fact, was to Bebbi a part of a shining ideal. Bebbi could tell herself the facts of life over and over again, like a nun telling her beads, but sleeping with a guy probably still meant soft kisses in all the tender corners of the face and neck and falling asleep with his arms wrapped around her and her head on his chest.

Louise looked at her clean greased face in the mirror and then beyond her own reflection to that of Bebbi lying face down on the

WEEK-END

bed, her head dangling over the side so that her soft blond hair fell over in a long unbroken swoop, leaving bare the white childlike neck. The baby, Louise thought, the poor baby. She's just waiting for me to leave. Quickly, angrily, she blinked her lids to keep back the tears. She could not remember when she had last cried, for in her silent conversations with herself, Louise blustered like an old-time political campaigner and to her god, if not to the people, she made expansive promises, to be fulfilled upon her election to happiness. In the meantime she stood firm on her platform, the most prominent plank, the one most often reavowed, being: "There's not a damn man in this whole damn world who can make me cry." If she cried now, it would be for Bebbi, yet in a way because of a man, always because of a man.

II

In what she hoped was a calm, reasonable tone, she began again, talking to the mirror.

"Bebbi, you know I don't mind leaving you the place for the week-end, and you know I'm not thinking about the moral angle—"

Bebbi raised her head quickly, turned it towards her and smiled. She flushed, wondering if she and Ted had made too much noise last night on the couch in the living room. If only Ted hadn't been so damn broke, they could have gone to a hotel or some place. She never enjoyed it here, even when Bebbi had gone to bed hours before. She was too conscious of every creak, every inarticulate sound, every labored breath. She bit her lips and started all over.

"If it was anybody else but that stinker, I'd say go ahead. But him! If you knew anything at all about men, you'd know he was poison. He doesn't even bother to hide it; he advertises it. The minute I laid eyes upon him, I knew it, and if you weren't such a baby, such a goddam fool . . . It's not just that he isn't in love with you, honey. Okay, so he's not in love with you and you know it and he knows you know it and it all sounds very much on the up and up, okay. But he doesn't even *want* you, he—"

AMERICAN VANGUARD

Bebbi snapped up in bed. "He does! How can you say a thing like that? How do you know so much about whether he wants me or not? If anyone should know, I guess it would be me."

"He tell you so?" Louise asked, in what she meant as merely a bit of rhetorical sarcasm, but Bebbi answered her with such an earnest directness that Louise swung around on the flounced stool to face her, as if she were not sure of hearing correctly the reflection.

"Of course he told me!" Bebbi cried. "He's never once told me he loved me, but he has told me how much he wanted me, and *needed* me, that other girls—Golly, Louise, the last time he put his head down on my lap and *begged*, like a little boy, just like a kid. I almost cried!"

Louise stared. "My god, oh my god. He begged, did he? And when you said no, did he go all to pieces, or did he make a marvelous recovery?"

"That's what I like so much about him, Louise, his restraint! He's got wonderful self-control. You can tell he would never hurt you, or do anything you didn't want him to, no matter how much he wanted to. He can just pull himself together and go on talking about something else as if nothing had happened, as if—"

"Yeah, yeah, as if he didn't really give a damn whether you went to bed with him or not. Which is exactly what I've been trying to drive into that head of yours. There's one way and only one way to tell whether a guy wants you or not, and that's by what he does, not what he says. How many times has he stood you up? Have you kept count? You poor sucker, you don't even know whether he's coming for sure tonight. You might be kicking me out in the cold all for nothing."

"It's not just standing up, Louise; it's different with him. He's irresponsible and unpredictable and he gets these sudden impulses. That's what I like so much about him. It's not all cut and dried. You never know just what he'll do or when he'll do it. He doesn't know himself, and it makes it exciting and fun, can't you see?" Bebbi

WEEK-END

was sitting up very straight now, her legs crossed under her, her eyes shining with her own faith, and her hands making quick little open gestures as if she were handing to Louise an explanation that was so real and concrete and reasonable it could be felt and touched. "I know he doesn't care much about me. I've told you so myself a dozen times. Not now. But afterwards, well—I'll want him even more, I know that. That's one of the reasons I've held out this long, being sort of afraid I'll want him too much then. Well, what's to keep him from wanting me even more—how do you know, how does he know it won't be different with me, and maybe—" She bit off her reply, suddenly conscious of the indiscretion, and flung herself back sullenly on the bed.

III

Louise could think of nothing more to say. It had all been said, or almost said, or left obviously unsaid. She picked up her lipstick and noticed with surprise that her hand was slightly shaky. Why the devil did she care so much? If the ninny wanted to go ahead and make a fool of herself, why bother? Her heart was going to be broken either way. She filled out her thin lips with the rich red color and tried to keep them from twisting bitterly as she thought of the essential ridiculousness of her own sex. They all think they're different, she sneered; they all think they're so damned different! It won't be that way with *me*, with *me* it'll be different, it won't happen to *me*, he's never met anyone like *me*, he'll find *me* different! They make me want to puke, she grimaced, simply puke.

How long would it take Bebbi to learn all that she had learned, she wondered, a sudden sadness seizing her. Surely she had learned. God, hadn't she learned. The very night Bebbi had introduced him, she had known. He was a good-looking devil, this Welsh, black hair, blue eyes, tall, slim—but she had known right off he was poison, and had watched him warily, from a safe distance. But even from a distance, she was uncomfortable when he looked at her. He didn't

AMERICAN VANGUARD

make a woman feel loose and limber and oiled and ready to go, though that was what a look like that should have made her feel. Instead he made her wonder if her stocking seams were straight, if maybe she hadn't ought to have sent her dress to the cleaners instead of wearing it just once more, if her nails were clean and if she smelled under the arms and if she had shaved her legs smooth. . . . She remembered to brush the lint off her shoulders and turned around casually. "Still going home next week, Baby?" she asked.

Bebbi turned her eyes guiltily from the direction of the alarm clock. "I've got to. I'd give anything to take my vacation later, but Mom's going to go ahead and have her operation and they'll need me at home." She wet her lips to say more, but only her eyes, clinging to Louise's, asked the question. Louise noticed for the first time that they no longer looked like the eyes of the cute babies that advertised evaporated milk. She bit down hard on the memory of her rebuffed advice to keep from running over and cooing all sorts of comforting little lies. Instead she lit a cigarette and blew the smoke out with conspicuous relish.

"What's the matter? Think he's going to forget you in two weeks?" she asked, and her voice was as thin and blue-cold as the tendril of smoke she concentrated on.

Bebbi dared another look at the clock, and Louise felt her lip curl in self-disgust, but she could not stop the added taunt. It came out even more sharply mocking than she had intended.

"Maybe you decided on this particular week-end so he'd have something to remember you by, huh? A two-week vacation and you'd think it was like the good old wartime mellerdramers with the hero going overseas, maybe never to return."

Bebbi screwed her face into a tight mask of misery and clapped her hands over her ears. "Shut up, shut up, shut up," she moaned.

Louise was almost frightened by the intensity of the distress in the huddled figure. She ran over and threw her arm lovingly around the younger girl. "I'm sorry, kid, honest. I'll lay off. For God's sake, don't cry. Do you want to look a mess when he comes?"

IV

The admonition worked like magic, as she had known it would. It was beginning to be a familiar feeling, this furious exasperation that gripped her whenever she thought of him. Why couldn't he pick on someone his own size? Why this one, whose sweetness and innocence were rooted far deeper than mere lack of physical experience. I was never like this, Louise thought, not even before I divorced Harry, not even before I married him. If my name was Elizabeth, you wouldn't catch anyone even thinking of making it Bebbi. She really thinks that if you give only good, you won't get back evil. Keeping herself untouched all this time, and knowing where I am when I stay out all night, and hearing me and Ted in here like the other night, and never throwing it up to me or getting on her high horse or being nobler-than-thou, even teasing me about it every now and then as if she was just like me, but not being like me at all. And then he has to come along. Again she felt dangerously on the verge of tears. Her anger of a moment ago crumbled before a warm melting surge of pity, pity for the soft girls like Bebbi, pity for the hard ones like herself, pity that the good and the stupid seemed so inseparable, pity for her own cleverness and the leanness it had left her with, pity that Bebbi was as young as she was and pity that she was not so young as Bebbi. Like some living pseudopodic amoeba, the pity crept through her thoughts and swallowed every image that came to her mind. Only the men, all the men, were left stranded on dry islands of hate. Just let one start something with *me*. Just let *him* try.

V

There was really nothing keeping her now except a strange reluctance to leave before he came. She could feel the shove of Bebbi's impatience to have her gone, so that she could abandon herself to

the torture of waiting, so that she could sit on the window ledge and watch the street below, so that she could jump if the telephone in the next apartment rang, or make a wild dash if the ring was theirs, so that she could throw herself on the bed in nervous exhaustion and then jump up for fear of being disheveled when he came. It was so ridiculous, so stupid, so hopeless, so avoidable, Louise could hardly restrain her impatience at this noble ineptitude for facing facts. It reminded her of the movies, with the suffering heroine forgiving and giving, forgiving and giving, for reel after reel, to the accompaniment of high-pitched violins. The kind she walked out of in the middle in dry-eyed exasperation. But this she could not walk out of with the same critical aloofness. In some way she had identified herself with the flat-faced blond celluloid queens. Not that she had ever doubted herself, but sometimes, particularly after communion or after a dose of popular love fiction, she doubted her way of living. There had been times when, alone in the apartment with her misgivings, she had robbed the icebox of bottle after bottle of beer until she was smothered by an alcoholic melancholy and would have broken down and cried, had she been able to remember how. On such evenings it had been good and comforting to lie awake in bed and hear Bebbi turn the lock, hear the slight scuffling and ardent whispering of her date, hear her finally shut the door firmly and tiptoe into the bedroom. Then Louise would turn over and go peacefully to sleep.

But Bebbi sat upright now on the chintz-covered chaise longue, usually littered with underclothes, but now cleared, like the rest of the bedroom, in anticipation of his occupancy. She had recombined her hair, repowdered her face, wiped away the smudges of mascara, and was sitting so as to preserve the pressing of her dress. Although she was thumbing through a copy of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, Louise knew she was really just sitting there, willing her through the bedroom door into the equally neatly arranged expectant living room, and from there through the front door into the hall, down the stairs, and on into the night and the long week-end. With a perversity she recognized but could not understand, she fought

WEEK-END

against this will, fought blindly and hopelessly, knowing defeat was inevitable, knowing that she had to leave. She thought of something she had forgotten to pack, she found a hole in one of her gloves and rummaged around for another pair, she called up Lily, who was cashier at Loew's Palace, with whom she was to spend the night, and checked on their meeting place. Then she could think of nothing else to do but go. She forced herself at the doorway to say good-bye as if there was nothing different about her departure, as if there would be nothing different when she returned. Then, from across the room, she said good-bye to herself in the mirror, approving her neat, restrained figure, approving the guarded possession that, at thirty, tightened her face like an astringent.

VI

She had lost, for she had to leave, yet she had won, because, turning the landing on the second floor, she saw him come in. The stairs were very narrow, and he stopped at the foot, resting against the newel post, waiting for her to come down. Even in the grimy, dimly lit hall, he had an air about him, an effectiveness that had its cause in something more than the soft, good-looking fullness of his features. As he looked her up and down, Louise, sucking in her stomach and continuing her descent slowly, tried frantically to think of some way to warn him off Bebbi. She stopped on the stair that brought her eyes to the level of his, and looked at him with a hard bright look. Though no quiver of emotion disturbed the set composure of her face or softened the defiance in her eyes, she felt, standing so close to him and meeting the shock of his glance, all that Bebbi had been up against. This was no healthy wolf. She did not feel that he had looked her over, found her appetizing, and was set to make a grab. He would not let a woman feel even that much power; he let her know immediately that she had nothing on him, not a thing, not even that.

"Leaving me a clear field?" he grinned, nodding at her bag.

"It just so happens that I'm going out of town for the week-end.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

Don't go getting ideas into your head about Bebbi. Bebbi is—" she broke off her sharp correction in confusion, realizing that Bebbi would define herself that night.

He did not shift his position, but his grin grew a little broader. He leaned over the bannister so that his face almost touched hers.

"Bebbi tells me she's leaving for a couple of weeks. Don't you ever get lonely when she's gone?"

"No!"

"I do." He was mockingly solemn now. "I get very lonely when Bebbi's gone. I shall come by and we'll sit and talk about Bebbi and cheer each other up." He nodded as if it were settled, and Louise could think of nothing to say. She gave him another hard bright look and passed him by, not acknowledging the good-bye he crooned after her. She slammed the heavy outside door with a violence that rebounded in frustration, since the door had a catch that made a gentle closing inevitable. She walked quickly to the subway entrance, feeling the cool fall night slapping her like a brisk massage. Her thoughts refused to catch hold on Bebbi; they slid quickly over this week-end, and fastened tight to the night he would come to "keep her company." She would, of course, slam the door in his face. Or she could pretend to welcome him in and then let him have it. He was probably so accustomed to picking on the very young and very innocent, he wouldn't know how to handle a woman who knew all the answers. She knew exactly what a man like that needed. By the time the subway swallowed her up, she had decided on the latter course, and was carefully editing the remarks she would make to him.

III

STREETS AND SHADOWS

The Unborn

A SKETCH BY THOMAS K. MARTIN

AS HE came through the door, he looked up with surprise at the long grey clouds stretching over the buildings on Fifth Avenue. Earlier in the afternoon he had gone into the library from beneath a blue, sun-flooded sky. Hesitantly crossing the marble porch of the library, he suddenly became aware of how slowly he was walking.

There it is again, he thought. A strong desire to turn and go back into the library swept over him. In there, upstairs, was the real, untormented world he always hated to leave. Beyond the porch the day stretched grey and pallid. Finally, remembering his appointment, he swung down the steps, looking closely at each passing face. How dead we are to each other, he thought, lifeless and cold, like shadows that walk and melt into each other without pain or feeling. He stopped on the step above the sidewalk and looked long and slowly at Fifth Avenue. Even some of the more brightly striped awnings over the shops were a wan, sick yellow under the late afternoon's greying sky. What is there here that is simple and graceful? he asked himself. A huge negative reply rose within him as he shouldered his way through the crowd to a bus stanchion at the curb. To ignore the crowded sidewalk, he deliberately kept his eyes on the cars and trucks racing along the street. As he watched the traffic, his thoughts went back to his afternoon's reading in the pleasant austerity of the library, and unconsciously re-entered the world of imagination he had left when the library door had swung shut behind him.

When a downtown bus slid to a stop beside the stanchion, he climbed into it and paid his fare, without seeing the driver or its occupants. The people who had been standing behind him at the

curb pushed into the bus; he was pushed down the aisle until he reached the last possible place he could stand. An elderly, heavily powdered woman pressed an elbow into his ribs; a man's bulk was heavy against his back.

The jostling of the crowd, as the bus started away from the curb, awakened him. He glanced about, the old contempt rising in his heart. A young woman whose eyes were level with his own was facing him, and though he felt her body pressed against his, her face seemed oddly removed, and he looked down to discover she was pregnant. He pushed back on his toes to lean away from her, and saw a line of gratitude form on her lips. He looked at her again, and was attracted by a bright fullness of her eyes; even in the murky interior of the bus he saw the soft glow shining in her face. His gaze lingered on her eyes. The impression of their beauty grew upon him. She was looking up the aisle over his shoulder; at least she seemed to be, he thought. He couldn't be sure where her eyes were turned, for within their depths, purple shadows faded into each other, and from far within them, a singular light rose and fell over her face. He couldn't remember having seen such a face before. And it wasn't the facial contours that formed the beauty, he realized; it was the strange persistent light that flowed over her face and made it appear that she was living far away from the crowded bus in a secret, mysterious world of her own.

The bus ground to a sudden halt, and enough passengers alighted to ease the pressure in the aisle, and he moved a few feet away from the girl. He could see the size of her stomach now, and it further amazed him. It was so large and distended that it seemed grotesque. Where the dress stretched around her stomach, the buttons stood taut over the fabric. He thought of the child moving within the stomach's dark interior. How close he was to that child. He could put his hand out and be inches away from it, he thought. But with that reflection, a sudden realization came to him that he could never touch the unborn child, that the thin layers of skin separating it from his hand could never be penetrated. Within the warm, dark sac where the child yet lay, it knew nothing of him or of the mother

THE UNBORN

upon whose body it fed. He looked at the girl's face, and an unexpected wave of pity welled up within him.

That face, he thought, that lovely face crowning such a misshapen body. The girl glanced at him, a quick flush shading her cheeks, and he realized that his insistent stare was making her uncomfortable. Their eyes met, and he felt a tender urge to move closer to her, perhaps even touch her. But the bus slowed to a stop, and she pushed up the aisle past him, moving carefully, her hands touching the safety grips on the seats as she walked. He watched her step down from the bus, walk to the pavement, and then turn around, apparently waiting for the bus to pull away from the curb before she crossed the street. The bus began to move, but he kept his eyes on the girl, and even through the street's flickering shadows, her face shone with the same flowing light that framed it when she had stood beside him.

The bus gained speed and he lost her face in the shifting traffic. He turned away from the window and glanced at his fellow passengers. Looking at a few of them closely, he could find no face that evoked the same feeling in him. In the dark interior of the bus his fellow passengers were vague, fading shapes to him. As he looked about, he realized that the flow of pity the girl had aroused was still warm somewhere within him. We are all like the infant in her belly, he thought. Here I am, I can put out my hand and touch four or five people. But can I touch them? Aren't they just as far away from me as that unborn infant was? Before his eyes he saw himself and every person on the bus as moving within a grey, shadowless caul. He glanced through the bus window and saw the people on the sidewalks moving along with a vague halo surrounding each of them. Wherever we go, he thought, we are within it. We are born and die within our cauls.

The bus driver called, "Eighth Street." He went quickly along the aisle and stepped off the bus. From the sidewalk he watched the bus move into the downtown traffic, and again felt the pleasant warmth which the girl had aroused in him. He turned toward Eighth Street and saw a heavy-jowled man near the corner. The

AMERICAN VANGUARD

man was blowing large puffs of blue smoke through a cigar he held stiffly in his mouth. He glanced at the man, and their eyes met. The man's eyes were cold and dead; they slid over him as though he were a piece of glass the man was looking through. He walked past the man down the street. At the fourth brownstone house he turned into an entry hall. Fumbling for his keys, he bent over to peer into his mail box. As he straightened up, a picture of the cigar-smoking man came into his mind. The blue smoke from the cigar rose into the grey sky and absently he raised his eyes to watch it spiral higher. Suddenly he saw the ceiling of the hall and shook his head foolishly as he discovered that he was watching the image within his mind as though it were real. He put his hand into his top-coat pocket and found the keys he had been searching for. The keys were cold, and as he held them in his hand, he realized that he was still warm, still touched by the glow of the girl's eyes. He slipped his key into the lock; the door opened easily before him.

Subway to Brooklyn

FIRST CHAPTER OF A NOVEL BY JOHN J. MALONEY

PAUL JOYCE walked slowly down the steps into the cavern of the Sheridan Square subway stop. It was long past midnight, yet the sodden Manhattan heat was almost unbearable. The young man (he was twenty-six) seemed lost in thought. His face was pursed and wrinkled into a half-squint, and when the local rumbled into the station, he wandered aimlessly aboard, and a few minutes later left it and crossed over to the express at Chambers Street with the unseeing instinct of the habitual subway rider.

Once on the express, however, his mood of introspection seemed to vanish; he began to gaze about intently at his surroundings. As much as he had traveled on it, the subway always fascinated him—fascinated and repelled him. This intricate labyrinth of tunnels and girders, of tracks and switches, this efficient system, manned by moles, which miraculously transported a million people every day under the city and its rivers, this great burrowing network, quarried painfully and with endless patience from the enduring rock, but here and there filthy as a stable or a sty. It excited him, and yet he hated it. The nerve-wracking smash and roar of the train through the vaulted tube, the rush of fetid air, the cheap hard colors of the billboards, garish in the yellow winking light, the somehow obscene white tiles of the stations that made them look, as they smelled, like public lavatories, and above all, the vicious crush and smell and squeal of flesh, of people herded and cramped together belly to buttock until they had no room for dignity or kindness, until the very air they breathed was not free, but merely the expelled breath of another.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

II

He looked about him now as the train swayed and clattered its way towards Brooklyn. The white looped hangers, slick from the sweat of the thousand hands that had clutched them in the weltering hours of the day, now were snapped back in rigid rows along the iron bars at each side of the car. Paul had the fleeting thought that they looked unnatural that way, that they should be dangling limp and tired, should be tossing crazily to and fro with the rocking motion of the train.

Across from him an old man moved leathery lips in noiseless mouthings as his weak eyes followed the lines of print back and forth across the pages of a Yiddish newspaper. Farther down another man in a dark blue shirt and wrinkled army sun-tan pants was stretched out on the soiled rattan bench, sound asleep. Beyond him a squat ugly man and his dowdy wife slumped glum and silent, staring sullenly at the roaring blackness outside the car windows. At the other end of the car a young sailor, flushed and tousled, and apparently a little drunk, sat with a heavy arm flung clumsily around the shoulders of a dark brazen-faced girl. And next to Paul an old woman, dressed entirely in black, swayed submissively with the motion of the train and gazed steadily at the littered floor with weary meek eyes.

These were the people in the car upon whom Paul looked, not with pity, not with love nor hate, but with pain. He knew that he was upset too easily by this ugliness, by these people whom he would never see again. But he was in a tired, morbid state of mind, brought on by months of solitary thinking—thinking which led him in circles. Ever since he had been discharged from the army five months ago he had been lost in a blind groping for some truth, for some code, for some philosophy by which he could live at peace with everyone, for some way of life that would include him and these people and everyone on earth, as brothers. And now as he looked at them hurtling through the caves of night under the city to some hot

SUBWAY TO BROOKLYN

and horrid tenement pile of ugliness, he could find no reason for their being—or for his.

III

The train jarred to a stop at Fulton Street. One man stumbled into the car, and for a few moments everyone's glance rested on him. For he was very drunk. Paul watched him with sickness and horror, and with a strange dread. He had been drunk many times himself, and the sight of this shambling sightless thing, familiar though it was in New York, filled him with a mixture of fear and shame, more for himself than for the man, or for mankind.

The man was perhaps forty, with a great wild shock of black hair sprouting low over his ravaged face. His shirt was unbuttoned, filthy and sweat-soaked, and his flapping bags of trousers were befouled with mud and vomit.

The man did not attempt to sit down, but having somehow pushed on the train, he stood swaying just inside the door. The jolt of the train as it started threw him off balance, and he lurched back against the closed door. There he remained, his knees sagging, his head nodding and lolling as though his neck were broken, his mouth drooling and working in idiot mutterings. Occasionally his head would jerk upright for a moment, and he would shake it and peer around the car with his red inflamed eyes, blind with rage and bafflement and the seething madness of cheap whisky.

Paul could not take his gaze from him—this monument to the dignity and nobility of man. This fumbling thing of the numbed brain and the rotten breath, low down in the scale of life: in his eyes neither the tranquil dumbness of the beast of the fields, nor the cold cruelty of the beast of the jungle, but rather the debased sottishness of man betrayed and beaten by civilization. And Paul felt a queer inexplicable kinship with the man. And again the nameless dread clutched at him.

The train rumbled along to Wall Street. Paul, thinking of it later, wondered how they had not all anticipated what would happen; and

AMERICAN VANGUARD

still later, as he became more enmeshed in his maze of thought and self-reproach, believed that he had half-consciously known what would happen, but had done nothing to prevent it. The train slowed to a stop at the Wall Street station. The door which had been supporting the drunken man shot open, and with a queer soundless gulp he staggered backward out of the car and fell heavily upon the stone platform.

Most of us live such drab and empty lives that the least deviation from the daily norm (provided, of course, that it does not inconvenience us) is greeted joyously. So it was now. An electric tension, a tingle of horror, but of horror very closely akin to pleasure, ran through the people in the car. One sensed it in their eyes, which suddenly became alive, in their bodies that winced and became tense. It was as if now, for these three or four seconds, they were once more alert, active, living, vital in all their parts and senses. They gasped and craned their necks to peer out of the windows at the fallen man.

Though he was apparently unhurt, the man was so drunk that he could not get up. He lay there clawing ineffectually at the air, like a beetle that has fallen on its back. Paul was sitting diagonally across from the open door and could clearly see the struggling man. He had half-risen from his seat when the man fell, but now he sank back again. He wanted desperately to help him, knew that he should, felt somehow that it was expected of him. Yet he didn't. Even stronger than his desire to aid the unfortunate hulk was his terrible shyness, his fear of calling attention to himself, his pampered aversion to any sort of scene. And the thought of touching the man was overwhelmingly repugnant to him.

It had taken perhaps two or three seconds for these mingled thoughts and fears to go tumbling through his mind. This suspended moment of inaction was suddenly broken. The short, thick-set man rose quickly from his seat, and leaving his wife to gape at him, scuttled out of the car to the aid of the drunken man. One of the trainmen had seen the accident, and he now appeared at his side.

SUBWAY TO BROOKLYN

Together they lifted the man to his feet and the short, squat man helped him back into the car.

"For Chris' sake, buddy," he was saying to him, "what's the matter wid ya—ya wanna get killed! Siddown here, and be good."

He good-naturedly shoved the drunk into a seat opposite Paul, and as he passed Paul on his way back to his wife, he bestowed upon him a solemn wink.

The drunk, shaken but partially sobered by his mishap, blinked stupidly around the car. He pulled a dirty crusted rag of a handkerchief out of his pocket and wiped away some blood from a small cut on the side of his head.

IV

The train started. The people in the car settled back resignedly. The mild flurry of excitement, the brief reprieve from monotony was over, and once again the starveling eyes were dull and lifeless.

Paul became preoccupied once more. He thought bitterly, 'Oh yes—I'm the great one—the noble-hearted one—the man who loves everyone—who is naive enough to believe the world can be remade by man's humanity to man—hah!—And these people around me here—I was full of shame for them—because they had no love or beauty in their lives.—But was it me, the altruistic—was it me, the great lover of mankind—was it me who picked up this miserable wreck and put him on his feet?—Why, hell no—it wasn't me—it was one of these poor wretched people who I look down upon because they have no love of man in their hearts— It was that ugly man over there, for whom I felt pain a minute ago because his life was barren and empty— Why, he has ten times the life and love and blood in him that I have— Was it me?—No, I was afraid of the stench of him— I was afraid of what they might say or think about me— I didn't want to be soiled with the filth of him— Oh, I love people all right—provided they can be kept at a nice respectable distance— Sure, I love 'em—as a mass—as a glob—as an abstraction

—but don't make me deal with the sodden dirty diseased individuals among them—please, *please*—don't let them come near me with their grimy pawing hands, their germs, their stinking breaths—and to think that I am such a damned presumptuous little prig as to even dare to pretend that I am writing a book about the goodness and truth of man!

With an effort Paul tore himself away from his merciless self-castigation and looked across at the drunk. He was startled to find that the man was staring at him with the strange intentness of which drunken people are sometimes capable. Paul looked away; he felt uneasy. He glanced back again. The man's eyes were still fixed on him in a malevolent, bloodshot stare. His mouth was moving in a mumble. Suddenly, and without taking his eyes from Paul, he said in a loud drunken voice, "What're you lookin' so God damn prim about?"

Paul ignored him.

"Hey, you—I mean you, fancy boy—sittin' on y'r ass wid y'r nose up in the air."

Paul looked around the car—looked anywhere except at the man's face. People were beginning to notice.

"Y'know what you are?—Y're a miserable bastard.—G'wan, ya miserable bastard, ya."

The other people in the car were looking at Paul now. He felt a hot blush of shame, as though the fault were his, creeping up the back of his neck and into his face. His heart was pounding violently. He heard coarse guffaws of laughter from the young sailor and his tart, and was certain that they were directed at himself. His confusion and embarrassment were painful. Where someone else might have made a jest of the situation, or carried it off in some other fashion, Paul was helpless. He could do nothing but sit there, flushed and miserable, with the nails of his clenched fingers digging into the straw seat, and let the flood of profane vituperation overwhelm him. Besides, he was possessed by a thought which would never have occurred to a less sensitive person; but which to him, plagued as he was by his own feelings of inadequacy, failure, and

SUBWAY TO BROOKLYN

guilt, seemed natural: the thought that he deserved to be cursed, that this foul-mouthed scarecrow across from him was right, that the alcohol in him had vested him with the clairvoyant powers of a mystic, and that he saw, he *knew* what an empty, shabby faker Paul really was. So he sat there, feeling the sweat start from his pores and trickle down his face and arms, and actually prayed for the train to arrive at the next station.

There it was at last—Borough Hall. The train stopped. Paul arose, trembling inwardly, and with as much dignity as he could muster, walked out of the door.

The evil little red eyes of the drunk followed him. "Thass right—ya miserable bastard—get out!—Y're no God damned good!"

He felt the gaze of the other passengers burning into his back as he walked away, fancied that he heard smothered laughs, evil snickers, and ribald jeers. He climbed weakly up the stairs into the grey streets of Brooklyn.

Peace

A SHORT STORY BY PAUL A. FINE

HER HOUSE was a ponderous old frame building, its yellow paint streaked grey by years of sooty rain. Set back from the street and shadowed by tall cottonwoods, it seemed to have withdrawn itself from the life of the small-town neighborhood about it. Uncut grass and dandelions tangled together into a dark-green, somber mass beneath the cottonwoods. As if to regain possession of the land, the spears of green reached up the brick foundation of the house and burst through the cement sidewalk which led up to the sagging front porch. Beside the door was a weatherbeaten doctor's shingle upon which the name—Dr. R. C. Williams—was barely discernible.

Within the house the doctor's widow, old and alone, sat peering out from between window drapes that were heavy with ancient dust. About her was the nostril-clogging, musty smell that seems eternally to hover about the windows of houses that have been long vacant. The smell did not oppress her. It was a smell that had become part of the oppression of the whole house which bore in upon her and made her feel sheltered and secure.

She sat watching the neighborhood children playing outside in the street. They couldn't fool her. Not for a minute. That ball they were playing with. She knew how easily it could break through this very window and send the glass flying, perhaps into her body. And that was just exactly what they wished would happen. It was a good thing that she had sense enough not to let them see her. That laughing and shouting in her street. That terrible little dog that ran barking after the ball as it rolled into her gutter. She clutched at her faded red silk negligee where it had fallen open about her sunken

PEACE

breasts and pulled it close, as if to keep out the evil, penetrating sounds.

What could a decent, law-abiding American do when even the street in front of her house—her street—was taken over by these Jews, or Mexicans, or God knows what. That one who was running with the ball now. Watch him. See. She knew it. Ran right up on her lawn. Even the street wasn't big enough for them. Her fingers tightened at her chest. Trampling on her parking, ruining her lawn. The greasy little beast. This thought pleased her, and she repeated aloud, "Beasts—all of them—greasy little beasts."

II

As she watched, the ball slipped from the hands of one of the children and rolled up into the deep grass of the parking. Two of the children dived for the ball and rolled over and over in the grass, tussling for possession of it. They stopped as they became aware of the silence of the others. They looked up to see the old woman rapping on the windowpane. "Get off my lawn, you dirty foreigners," they heard her shriek. "I'll call the police. That's what I'll do."

The children drew back, formed a semicircle across the street from the face that raged at them. "Old Lady Witch," they taunted, singsong. "Old Lady Witch." When the face disappeared from the window, they resumed their game.

Yes, she *would* call the police. She would show them. Her muled feet minced with angry steps over the thick dank carpet of the room, away from the window and out to the hall where the telephone sat in dusty loneliness. A lone Christian woman surrounded by evil. Surrounded by shouting, heathen hoodlums. It was more than anyone could be expected to bear.

There was silence outside. She became aware of it as she was reaching for the receiver of the telephone. They were creeping up to set fire to her house. To burn the roof over her head. In her mind she could see them crawling through the grass toward her house. They

AMERICAN VANGUARD

would stop at nothing. She turned from the telephone and rushed to the hall window.

The children were grouped in the street, talking in half-frightened whispers and pointing toward her porch. When she craned her neck, she could see what they were pointing at. Their ball. It had rolled up the sidewalk to the steps of the house.

With a cry she flung the door open and dashed out, red silk flying behind her. She leaned down and snatched up the ball. "Give us our ball," the children said. "We ain't hurtin' nothin'. Give us our ball."

Her finger was pointing at them, her head shaking wildly. "Get out of my street. Get your dog out of my street. Go home to where you belong. Go on home to your dirty, greasy houses." Her stringy hair streamed over her face as she threw her head forward. Her fingernails dug into the cover of the ball.

One of the children shouted, "This ain't your street, Old Lady Witch. This ain't nobody's street. This is a free country." The other children began the singsong chant, "Old Lady Witch, Old Lady Witch, Old Lady Witch."

The brown pup stuck his head out from between two pairs of legs and snarled, his eyes gleaming. As the gleaming eyes momentarily transfixed her gaze, the old woman felt a cold horror flash through her. She drew back her arm and with her puny might threw the ball at those twin points of hell-light. One of the children caught up the ball and ran with it down the street, and the others followed him with wild shouts of relieved tension. The old woman ran sobbing back into the house.

III

Her mind raced with her feet. On the shelf of the doctor's room. It *was* hell-light in those eyes. Beasts. Young beasts. And the devil himself looked at her from the eyes of that animal of the young beasts. But he feared her. Like it says in the Book—it is Good that he always fears. On the shelf in the doctor's room. In the corner of the old medicine shelf. Ah, she would show him.

PEACE

She opened the door of her dead husband's room, hurried to the closet where he had kept the drugs he might need in an emergency. She saw what she was seeking. A small bottle with the word *strychnine* clearly typed on the label. Now that piece of leftover meat in the icebox. Her heart pounded heavily within her, and her throat felt dry and tight from the exertion and the excitement.

The children were playing down the block now. The brown pup, ignored, wandered alone back toward the house. He sniffed at the tall grass along the curb and growled playfully at a stray piece of paper. A welcome smell reached his nostrils. By the corner of the dingy old porch he found what his nose had told him was to be found. He bit into the piece of meat happily, hungrily.

The old woman sat and watched from behind her curtain. Her body was relaxed, her mind quiet and serene.

The Last Flight

A SHORT STORY BY KAY BRODNEY

IT WAS dark outside when she woke. She lay there wondering what time it was, not caring really—it made no difference. The light from the street lamp shone upward through the venetian blinds and lay in stripes on the ceiling, faintly illuminating the room. Bars already, she thought, and laughed shortly aloud. Depression welled up in her, then died away, leaving her tired and detached. She frowned and closed her eyes, trying to fight her way back to the center. Yesterday—yesterday you went—she prodded herself. But yesterday was only a word, the day before today, and today was only a word. You ought to get up and have a couple drinks, that usually stops it, she thought. She lay thinking this over and over, trying to force the thought into will and the will into action.

The street door of the apartment house opposite banged open and voices broke in on her disjointed thoughts. A woman was saying, "But why do we have to go there? I don't want to go there."

"You got any better suggestions?" It was a man's voice.

"There's plenty of other places. Why do we always have to go there?"

"Whadya mean 'always'? We ain't been there in a month."

"Well, I'm through going places where they make you feel embarrassed to be normal."

"Normal! You normal? Ha!"

Another man broke in. "What the hell's keeping her? Heh, Maggiel!" he bellowed. "Maaaaaaggiel!"

There was a sound of a window flung open. The girl rolled over on her stomach, lifted one of the slats of the blind, and peered out

THE LAST FLIGHT

the window. Across the street the outline of a heavy-set woman filled the window frame.

"Shut up, down there," the woman called good-naturedly. "I had to answer the phone. It's for you, Louie."

The first man broke off arguing with the girl. "Who is it?"

"Rose. She says you and her were going to some meeting tonight."

"Meeting? That's Wednesday."

"Today's Wednesday, you dope!" they chorused.

The woman at the window said, "You better come up and talk to her. She's pretty burned up."

"Oh, Christ!" he said, walking up the steps. "Whadya have to answer the phone for in the first place?"

"Don't let her suck you into anything," the second man called after him. "You're on *this* party now, Louie."

"Don't worry," the other answered, and slammed the front door.

II

The phrase "Today's Wednesday, you dope!" ran over and over in her mind. Wednesday at eight, Wednesday at eight—it should mean something to her, but it didn't. Maybe you wrote it down on the telephone pad, she thought. She'd made a habit lately of writing notes to herself.

She stumbled into the living room and switched on the lamp. It came back to her as soon as she saw the name of the restaurant scribbled on the pad. Saturday she'd met Jimmy White on the subway; she hadn't seen him in over three years. He was back finishing up at New York University on the GI bill. They'd made a dinner date for tonight; he wanted her to meet the Army friend he was rooming with in the Village. She smiled now, sourly, remembering the day-dreams she'd built around this friend of Jimmy White's. That's you, all right; you dream about a stranger for four days, and then you sleep right through your appointment to meet him. Well, not through, she corrected herself, glancing at the clock; you could still make it—get there by nine. She squirmed away from the picture it

AMERICAN VANGUARD

made in her mind. Of herself sitting with them in the restaurant looking at him and remembering how she'd been dreaming of him the last four days. The things she'd meant to say and the way they'd be together curdling in her mind. She knew when she saw him and heard him speak, she'd start shivering with that cold revulsion and just want to get away. But she never got away because another part of her took over and played out the stupid circular game. Then, afterwards, remembering the other times it had been the same way, and knowing it would never be any different for her. She'd think of all the ways she could kill herself and then she'd start crying or if she couldn't stop thinking, she'd get drunk. Either way she'd wind up in bed sleeping the clock around again. She told herself all this coldly because that's the way it had always ended before and she knew it should run off the same pattern tonight, but it didn't scare her the way it always could when she told herself this other times. Maybe it's because tonight there's not this other side of you telling you this time it's going to be different. Where are you, dear? she questioned derisively. Did I get up and leave you sleeping? Are you still in there dreaming of your dinner date with "the one who'll change all this"? She chuckled softly. Get up, get up. They're eating without you.

A siren wailed along Twenty-third Street. She looked at the open door to the roof where the sound flooded in. "Sh!" she mocked reprovingly and started for the steps as though to close the door. When she got there, the siren cut off abruptly, leaving her gazing up into the muted night. She walked up the half-dozen steps out onto the roof, a small tarred area with a broken wicker couch and chair, which was her private backyard.

The night was warm and damp, stirring her with the long-since-dead hopes of other spring nights. As the Empire State, her symbol of New York, glittered in the darkness, she felt a gentle pity for herself. And resignation. A wind breathed softly on her face. She looked out over the city, no longer afraid of the night noises. She sucked in a deep breath. God, I'm hungry. I'll go eat with them just to spite her, she thought, and climbed back down into the living room. She

THE LAST FLIGHT

glanced slyly at the half-open bedroom door. Get a good rest, dear. I'll be home early and tell you all about it. She decided on the light blue dress with the sequins down the sleeves, and tiptoed theatrically across the room, amused with herself.

But it was not in the closet when she looked. She leaned against the door jamb, and a flicker of bewilderment and terror touched her. She had a concrete image of herself bringing that dress home from the drycleaners—day before yesterday, wasn't it? She dressed herself in her gabardine suit and put on her make-up, still brooding over it. She was ready to leave, but then she could not find her purse. The relaxed oneness she'd felt on the roof began to slip from her, and she had only a frantic desire to get out of the apartment. She grabbed one of the extra keys off a hook in the kitchenette and scooped the small change from a saucer on the shelf. Maybe it would come to her, where she had left her purse; she couldn't concentrate now. She left a light burning and hurried downstairs.

It was only a block over to the subway. She bought a newspaper to read on the five-minute ride so she wouldn't have time to think. There was a review of a new Guild musical, and she noted with proud recognition that Ben Leonard was listed far down in the cast. She'd known Ben fairly well back in college.

III

The restaurant was a small Italian place below the Square. After scanning the main dining room, she stepped toward the archway that opened into a smaller room. They were at the first table. Jimmy, with his back to her, was doing the talking. His Army friend fingered a wine glass and smiled confidently at the third person at the table, a woman only partially visible to the girl in the archway, who had stepped aside to let a couple come out. She noted with a start and then instant amusement that the woman's sleeve was blue with sequins on it. It's lucky you didn't get your dress from the cleaners, she told herself, or there'd be blood with both of you dressed alike.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

Then the woman stood up saying, "Be back in a sec," ran her hand over the man's shoulders as she pushed past him, and walked toward the door in the back marked "Women." The smirk on the girl's face froze to a grimace of horror—for the woman in the blue dress was herself.

She stared after the closed door and shuddered. This is it, you've gone insane—this is it.

"Well, what do you think of her?" Jimmy was saying.

"Hardly what I've been fighting for," the other answered. "Was she always this willing?"

"Hell, no, a militant virgin when I knew her. Ah, where are the girls of yesteryear, with the prewar standards?"

"Dream on, Mac. I'll take what comes around."

She turned and fled from the restaurant.

IV

She crossed the street hurriedly, afraid they might come after her, and cut up through a side street. After four blocks, a couple coming out of a bar bumped into her. She came out of it a little then, thinking if people apologized for bumping into her, then she must be alive and there. She went into the bar and ordered bourbon and water, but as soon as the bartender turned away from her, she remembered she had only twelve cents on her.

"Ah, hold it for me, I'll be right back," she called after him and hurried out of the bar as though she had just seen an old friend outside. A block from the bar she stopped and tried to decide where she could go. She dreaded going back to her apartment alone until she remembered a nearly full fifth of rye in the broom closet.

She let herself in the apartment cautiously, glad she had left the light on. The half-open bedroom door confronted her. After a moment she crossed over and kicked it open, snapping on the light. The bed stood crumpled and empty. She started to shake and then to laugh. She crossed her arms around her body and walked to the

THE LAST FLIGHT

broom closet, holding down her hysteria. She got out the bottle and a water glass, and sat down at the table.

You get the DT's before you drink, she thought. She half-filled the glass, held it up, then put it down again, spread her hand before her, and stared at its trembling. Deliberately she raised it and brought it down full force on the edge of the table. The bottle and glass jumped. She smiled grimly, holding up her hand and looking at it again. You're going to break it one of these days, she warned herself calmly. But, as always, her brain cleared. The pain made herself immediate, caught her thoughts and sensations into one concern—the throbbing ache in her hand.

She picked up the glass in her other hand, drained it, and filled it again. She sat there until she had killed the bottle, feeling only the pain and the deliberateness of her getting drunk. You'll be all right tomorrow, she told herself steadily. Don't think about it at night, that's all. Just get drunk and go to bed, and then it will be morning.

V

The phone had been ringing for nearly a full minute before she became conscious enough to know what it was. At that moment it stopped ringing. She threw her legs over the side of the couch and rolled over onto her feet, then slumped to her knees. The memory of the rye came back to her, and she crawled forward on her hands and knees to the phone. The wire was dead.

She looked over at the clock—two-ten in the morning. She pulled herself up into the big chair and lit a cigarette. There was a feeling of dread hanging over her. She tried to remember what it was. That nightmare! Dreaming she'd gone down to have dinner with Jimmy White and a friend of his but when she got there a woman got up from the table and it was herself. The dream was very vivid and she shuddered. What was the rest of it? She'd gone into a bar for a drink, only she didn't have any money. God, you're always dreaming of not having enough money to pay for something, she sneered. Other people dream of walking naked down Fifth Avenue, but you're al-

AMERICAN VANGUARD

ways out of money. Then in the dream she'd run out of the bar and come home, and gone to bed after killing the bottle of rye. She looked around the room and saw the empty bottle on the table. She was still staring at it, trying to think, when the phone jangled beside her. She started, then reached over and answered it.

"Hello, Ellen? I called you a couple minutes ago. You must have just got in. At least I hope I didn't get you out of bed." The voice laughed unpleasantly. She recognized it as Jimmy's and wanted to apologize for not showing up at dinner, but she didn't speak. The idea occurred to her dully that this, too, was part of the dream.

"I got Ritter's number here. You better write it down. It's PLaza 3-0929, extension 8. Call him around eleven, and make an appointment."

She wrote down the number dutifully, then asked, "Appointment for what? Who's Ritter?"

"Are you kidding? Say, how drunk are you?"

"Pretty drunk," she admitted.

"Well, put Dave on a second."

"Dave?"

There was a pause. Then Jimmy said tiredly, "Okay, baby, play it coy. I'll call you in the morning. Maybe he'll talk then. Or maybe you'll be sober enough to remember what the hell we've been talking about all night. Goodbye, for Chrissakes!" He hung up.

She replaced the phone slowly and looked around the room. The empty bottle caught her eye. She went over and picked it up. She studied the label as though it would have the answer printed on it under the alcoholic content. When she set it down again, she saw the newspaper folded on the table. The front page had a newly familiar look and she glanced at the date under the masthead. The phrase "Today's Wednesday, you dope!" ran over and over in her mind. Who had said that? Wednesday at eight—Wednesday at eight. She leaned on the table and shut her eyes. The loudness of her heart frightened her. Can hearts explode, she wondered. Ben Leonard. She took the paper over to the chair and sat down. After a while she opened it to the theater page and looked down to where she knew

THE LAST FLIGHT

his name would be. She sat in a leaden daze staring at the print. Her blood pounded heavily within her; her body vibrated with the beating. She tried to think clearly, to put the dream and the reality, the sleeping and the waking, in a sane, orderly sequence, but the slow rhythmic beating of her pulse grew louder in her senses. Like the constant slapping of waves on a pier, it lulled her into a dull trance. "I must think this out, I must think this out, I must think this out," her mind chanted, in rhythm with her pulsing blood.

VI

After a while she became conscious of voices on the stairs below. A woman was saying in mock severity, "Stop it! Can't you wait till we get upstairs? After you. Go ahead."

"Nope, ladies first. After *you*."

"Well, then *treat* me like a lady," the woman giggled. They started up the last flight.

The girl rose swaying.

"You got your key?"

"Sure I got my key. Whadya think? Forget my key? Got a whole—unh—couple extras in the kitchen. Give ya one. 'Seasier."

They were on the top landing. The key scraped uncertainly around the lock. She looked wildly about the room for some place to hide. The door to the roof was open. She stumbled panic-stricken up the steps.

It was ten feet to the edge of the roof, but she kept on running.

The door swung in, hurling a couple into the apartment.

"Ooh, left all the lights on," the woman said. She pitched into the bathroom, her voice continuing through the closed door. "Bottle's in the broom closet, in the kitchen. An' call Jimmy, gotta see that guy Ritter in the morning."

Dave called back from the kitchen, "The broom's here, but no bottle."

"Okay, okay, I'll find it. Call Jimmy. Get that guy's number."

AMERICAN VANGUARD

His voice answered a moment later, "Who are you kidding? You've got his number."

She came out of the bathroom to find him holding the telephone pad toward her. She took it and stared at the name and phone number, then looked slowly about the room in fogged bewilderment. Her eye halted at the empty bottle on the table.

"You must have a gremlin, a nice one—turns on your lights for you, takes your telephone messages—"

"Yeh," she said frowning uncertainly, "and drinks my rye."

"Think he'll have breakfast ready for us in the morning?" he asked, pulling her to him.

Her frown faded. She leaned against him, clumsily seductive. "Wait around and see," she answered.

It Wouldn't Be Purple

A SHORT STORY BY ALAN W. GOLDMAN

RUTH walked along 33rd Street thinking about her lunch date. George Parkehurst had asked her to lunch. A fog of mixed thoughts loomed when she thought of Parkehurst. Over ten years since she'd seen him—over twelve since she had worked for him in that miserable little advertising agency he owned. And now a lunch date with him—and at Shine's, too. Why in the name of God would the vice-president of a big advertising agency want to eat at Shine's? She could understand the Colony or one of the East Side places—but why Shine's? Could it be for an impression—was it for old time's sake? They had worked together in an agency (really a hole-in-the-wall) not two blocks from Shine's.

She passed Gimbels and saw the snub-nosed ten-ton trucks waiting to be unloaded. Men in parts of army uniforms stood along the curb and helped set the piled cartons on the little four-wheeled dollies. They wheeled them into the freight entrances, then slid the empty cartons back to the curb. There they relaxed—leaned against the truck fenders till another load was stacked on the curb.

II

She turned north on Seventh Avenue and pushed the door to Shine's open. A tall, thin-nosed man with deep-set, tired eyes was playing with a stirring rod at one of the wall booths. When Ruth came in, he smoothed back his thinning hair—broke into a toothy grin. He slid out of his seat and trotted over to her.

"Ruth, baby—how are you? God, you look wonderful! Come on over—I've a table."

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"Hello, George. You're looking fine yourself. How is life in the big fat bank-roll stratum?"

"I get along, Ruth, I get along." He walked to the booth with her and half helped her into her seat. She slipped off her gloves and slapped them on the long bench.

"I've already ordered a drink for you. Still drink bourbon—a little soda, a little ginger?"

"Yop, you remembered. You look perfectly fine, George. Haven't put on an ounce, I'll bet. And that suit of yours is right out of Brooks Brothers." She looked closely at his face for an instant, then widened her eyes. "I didn't notice, but your moustache—you got rid of that moustache. Oh, you look better, much better."

Parkehurst brushed his hand over his upper lip.

"I took *that* off three years ago," he said. "It's one of those things you grow when you're about thirty to look mature, then get rid of at forty-eight to look youthful."

"Let's not talk about age, George. I'm thirty-three, unwed, and ready to forget a birthday at the drop of a hat—anyone's hat."

"Right! I was just *talking*, you know." He looked over the menu as he spoke. "What do you know for sure? Seen any of the old bunch lately?"

"Well, Frank Teener had a place near mine on Fire Island last summer, but he was so busy with his painting that I hardly saw anything of him. Oh, yes. I ran into Ed Westley about two weeks ago at Costello's. He's awfully nice, even though he drinks Irish whisky. Eddie has always regarded me as sort of a younger sister, you know."

The waiter had come over to the table and stood there with a towel over his arm. His white wrap-around apron was clean and he kept fussing with the tie cords in the back.

"I'll have the roast beef—an end cut. Order the beef—it's very good here, you know."

Ruth looked up and down the menu without really seeing anything. "All right, the beef, but no potatoes. I'll have some carrots or some spinach."

IT WOULDN'T BE PURPLE

The waiter nodded his head, wrote down the order, and shuffled off toward the rear.

"Those were the days, huh, Ruth?" Parkehurst was sucking on a cigarette and looking over Ruth's shoulder at the painted metal ceiling. "With that little two-by-four agency of mine. Sometimes I wonder why I ever got out of it. Remember when you came up there looking for a job?"

Ruth remembered. It was 1935—a bad year to have left Smith, no matter what the graduation speaker had said about making your own opportunity. Ruth worked as a typist for a month before she saw the ad George had placed in the *Times*. The next morning, when she walked into George's office, she had sixty-three cents and a package of Wings cigarettes in her handbag.

"Sure, George, I remember. You told me you never thought I could write. Why?"

Parkehurst laughed through his nose, almost snorted. "I think I was afraid you'd ask for too much money. The funny part was you were so frightened you asked for even less than I thought I'd have to pay!"

III

As they talked, the waiter came in and took away their empty glasses. He placed the huge oblong platters of beef in front of them. Ruth looked at hers. It was too well done. She thought of telling the waiter—decided not to. Parkehurst droned on about a world and people ten years gone. Ruth started to eat and almost had the knife jostled out of her hand by a passing lady in a mink jacket.

"You know, George," she said, "you didn't tell me why you asked me to lunch. Not that I mind. But I'm sure you have something up that well-pressed worsted sleeve of yours. What is it?"

"Ruthie, baby," he cried. "Can't I ask an old friend to lunch? You know how I feel about you. Old times and old flames go well together."

AMERICAN VANGUARD

Ruth hurriedly looked down at her plate. Oh, Lord, she thought. Here it goes—the old acid bath he likes to call love. No, it couldn't be that. George is too smart to try to pull a maudlin trick like that. It's something else—he wants to know about something or somebody. "Please," she said. "Please, I wish to God you wouldn't. . . ."

"O.K., O.K. I'll give it to you straight without any frills. I ran into Ed Westley out at the Plandome golf course two, maybe three days after he saw you. We gabbed and had a few good laughs over old times. He spoke about you—said you were doing a bang-up job of writing copy where you are now. He also said you were thinking of a change. At least that's what he told *me*. We're looking for a new addition to our copy division. *I* know you could handle the job. It's yours, if you want it."

The coffee came in big white cups with the steam spiraling up from it. They exchanged sugar and cream—Ruth plopping two lumps into her cup. The waiter shuffled off. Parkehurst waited until he was out of earshot. Then he continued.

"I don't like to blurt out job offers like this—maybe I should have been more subtle. But that's the story—and that's the reason for the lunch. What does that add up to?"

Ruth unsnapped her cigarette case, took out a cigarette. George leaned over and lit it for her. Her cheeks hollowed as she drew on it. "How much, dear?"

"We'd pay up to \$14,000. That means I'd get you \$14,000 for sure. Maybe there'd be a little bonus to take care of the taxes. But it would be about \$14,000."

"I like that—I like *that* fine," Ruth said. She looked at George carefully as though she had never seen him before, studying every feature. Once, an employment agency had sent her to be interviewed for a \$12,000 position. She hadn't gotten it—she hadn't known any people and she was too young. Now she knew something she wanted was being placed within her reach. She'd thought of situations like this when she had first gotten into advertising. Big executives coming over to her and would she *please* take this or that job at a tremendous price. George became a man to "know." She

IT WOULDN'T BE PURPLE

knew George. Employment agencies usually take a five per cent fee for finding you a job.

"Your fee?"

George looked startled—a little puzzled. "What?" he asked.

"I mean what's it like, this account. If you don't want to tell me their names, O.K., but what's it like?"

"It's a big soft drink outfit. They place about nine million dollars worth of advertising with us each year. They're our bread and butter—our melba toast and smoked turkey, too. Know what I mean?"

Ruth nodded. "I think I know. But I don't know what to say."

"Yes," Parkehurst said.

"What?" Ruth looked up startled.

"Yes, say yes." Parkehurst slipped a cigar out of a heavy alligator case. "Why not? You'll like it. The writing end of it is almost a cinch. We just try to keep their name before the people. If we can sell a few more cases of their stuff a month, why that's fine all the way around."

"Well, I don't know, exactly," Ruth said.

"Look—let me fill in a little background. It's hard for me to explain, but I'll try to tell you what our agency is like." He fidgeted in his chair—drew on his cigar till the end glowed red. "Anyway," he said, "I'll try to tell you what our *clients* are like. It's really a case of our keeping them happy—they keeping us happy. The campaign you'd be working on has an easy sort of tone to it. Nothing frantic or excited at all. Want me to go on?"

"Sure."

"Well, without stepping on any toes, I suppose it's the way I'd want you to feel about me. Not too serious, sort of casual and easy." He rubbed his hand over his chin, then behind his ear. "It would mean *more* than it said—but maybe I can explain it in other terms. Like, for example, if it were a song, it would be something like '*She Didn't Say Yes—She Didn't Say No.*' Get what I mean?"

Ruth wasn't sure she knew what George meant. She thought she knew, but she wasn't sure.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"Not exactly," she said.

"Well, in another sense, if it were a color, it wouldn't be purple. Get *that*?" Parkehurst stared at her for a few seconds, then motioned the waiter over and paid his bill.

Ruth started to speak, but Parkehurst cut her short.

"What I was saying—it's nice. I should be able to see more of you, and I could take that without too much trouble. After all," he said, grinning, "nobody wants to work forever."

Ruth glanced at her watch, then started to gather her purse and gloves together. "I have to be going. I'm a bit late now, as it is."

George helped her into her coat and they walked through the heavy oak doors together.

"May I get you a cab?"

"No—I'll walk a way."

Parkehurst stepped into a cab that was turning out of Penn Station. "Think it over, will you, Ruth? I'd like to know." He started to get into his cab, then stepped out, threw his topcoat in first. He turned to Ruth.

"Make it soon, huh?"

IV

Ruth started to walk east. At Sixth Avenue she caught a cab and asked the driver to take her back to 146 East 46th Street. All the way back to the office she turned Parkehurst's offer over in her mind. She looked at it from all angles, twisted her face in painful thought. The ride up Fifth Avenue was slow. She took a cigarette out of her case, lit it, inhaled slowly.

How does one do this logically? she asked herself. Do you sit down and think? Do you wait for a clue, an omen? Half laughing to herself, she thought of the Delphic oracle. Didn't they throw a chicken into the cave or something? To appease the gods. Or was it Aristotle they threw the plucked chicken at? Now she was getting off the track. All right, then try to think it out. Like a problem in logic. On one hand there was George. Eight years ago she had barely tolerated

IT WOULDN'T BE PURPLE

him. He annoyed her—he was always making a play for her. He frightened her too, in a way. Like a snake. An asp. A stupid asp, she thought, almost giggling at the quip. The chances were he was still like that. There was no reason for him to change. The offer was a lightly veiled invitation to start again. He knew that. She did, too. But George was a clever businessman. After all, he'd have to show those people something for their \$14,000. Very probably, she could handle it. But \$14,000 wasn't hay. Like the horse said—I won 14,000 bales of hay, and that ain't money!

The cab crawled along. An old man darted out from the curb, sprung back again as though he were on a string.

Fourteen thousand dollars. That was enough to do things with. She could save half—more than half, if she were the least bit careful. Then some of those 2.9 per cent bonds that were better than gold. There was a little place in Bucks County, too. It had thick stone walls, 28 acres of land, 4 acres of brush. It also had a \$12,000 price tag. She could manage *that* easily after two years.

"This is it, lady. 146 East?"

Ruth nodded at the driver and eased herself out of the cab.

"That's eighty-five cents even, on the meter, lady." The cab driver clicked back the lever on the meter.

Ruth handed him a dollar bill and walked slowly into her building. Once inside, she stopped at the elevators and stared idly at the big dial over the bank of cars. In a few seconds, she walked over to one of the doors, and a moment later it whirled open.

"Hello, Fred," she said.

The elevator man smiled at her. "Hello, Miss Saunders—nice out?"

She nodded and waited for the car to fill. Now take Fred, for instance, or the cabby who brought her up here. What did they make? What did they have? Forty, maybe forty-five a week. Nothing much. Not 14,000. Not 14,000 in five years.

She thought about the things she had wanted. Something was always just out of reach—just a little too breath-taking when the price was mentioned. Like the plain silver box at Plummer's.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

Imagine wanting \$200 for a simple little box, a simple little cigarette box. Why, for the same 200 she could get three good suits—well, maybe two *really* good ones.

“Here’s your floor, Miss Saunders.”

“Thanks, Fred, thank you.”

The agency she worked for took up the entire floor of the building. She walked toward the row of copywriters’ offices. She stopped at the one with her name on the door. She walked in—draped her coat over a chair. Ruth opened her desk drawer for some Kleenex and wiped off her lipstick. As she looked into the mirror, little ideas crawled through her mind. She didn’t really *like* George. Neither of them were kids, though. Her compact mirror told her she needed more cream around her chin—on her neck. George might not always give her that toothy smile. His talk *was* bright if there were a few people around.

She picked up her phone and dialed the copy chief’s secretary.

“This is Ruth Saunders. Is Mr. Wiley in? I’d like to see him.” She waited a few seconds. “No, it’s about leaving. You say four-thirty? Thanks.”

She hung up, turned back to her desk, and carefully began to make up her face again, putting her lipstick on with a little gilded brush.

The Shape of the World

A SKETCH BY MARAT KAUFMAN

NO she said it's wrong I know it's wrong

He kissed her and pressed clumsily against her No it's right everything else is wrong but this is right this is the only thing that's right he wondered if his drunken breath disgusted her as much as it did him

How do I know it's right how do I know you won't tell the boys in the barracks

I won't tell them I'm a noncommissioned officer I just tell them what to do

No you'll tell them

Oh Jesus Christ he kissed her as hard as he could and gripped her arms and pulled her toward him

How do I know she said

All you have to know is this this is all you have to know this is all there is to know this is all that is worth knowing this is the way it started and although there is a very famous joke about it ending this way this is as good a way to end as there is and is preferable to many endings that are not jokes and very many boys and girls have wished that this were the authorized approved ratified accepted sanctified end and that this were eternity although that would prove rather exhausting after three or four millenniums although this is as close to the millennium as we can get but then it is only the psychological experience that I am interested in a very refreshing though banal lie and this is an important part of the therapy by which I hope to overcome the hysterical condition which is due to the violent traumatic experience I passed through in the unprecedented shock of being born without being warned or oriented

Oh she said

AMERICAN VANGUARD

That's it he said that's it

Sam once told me and he should know as he is a doctor and above and beyond was in The International Brigade that the only thing we are born to do is to reproduce and therefore this is the proper field a very well ploughed field in my opinion but then you can't have everything although that would be nice after a long time of having nothing

Where are you from she said

Arizona

Oh she looked at his greens which were on the table do you really rate all those ribbons

Yes

You seem so young do you have any medals

Hundreds thousands millions no one else has the medals I have

How many ribbons have you all in all

Ten they are all combat and foreign duty ribbons

Your parents must be very proud of you he was surprised at what she said it would have been expected from a prostitute but she was not one she was a lower junior a very typical college girl

I cannot really say that my parents are proud of me. When I was eight years old, my mother took my brother and me aside and said, "Tell the judge that you want to stay with Mother," and when the case of O vs. O came up, I cried very loudly, and when I stopped crying, I looked at my father and smiled, for he was my ideal, and then I looked straight ahead and said in a high voice, "I want to stay with Mother I want to stay with Mother I want to stay with Mother." After the proceedings had been terminated, my father came over and smiled at my brother and me. My mother said, "Get away, you degenerate. I'm afraid you'll contaminate them. Go and get drunk and play cards. You know how to do that. Go away. You know how to do that. You left many times. Once you left for seven months, and I was a fool and believed you and took you back. Now you can leave for good. I can't stop the children from seeing you, although I wish I could. I'll worry every minute when they're with you, but I never want to see you again." My father put his big hand on my shoulder.

THE SHAPE OF THE WORLD

"Be a good boy," he said in a very quiet voice. "I'll see you." "Get your hands off him," my mother said.

This is really the most pleasant part of it it is not the most exciting or spiritually cleansing but this the interval between the end of one and the time needed to reorganize for the beginning of the next is the most pleasant it is a very warm and comfortable feeling this lying with her body's warmth and mass close to yours and it is at times like these that the finest and most satisfying objectivity can be reached and this is what the absolute must be and if I believed in reincarnation I would be a Buddhist it is the logical thing although it is a very strict affair and essentially antiprogress but if I had my choice this is how I would like to spend eternity as this gives me a very young and pure outlook.

I walked up the two flights and looked at the names under the doorbells. "Who are you looking for?" a fat woman asked. "I'm looking for O," I said. She pointed. I thanked her and knocked on the door, twice softly, once loudly, once softly, as I had seen the gangster do in the movie. My father opened the door. "Come in," he said and smiled. I walked in and sat down on the long, wide, cheap bed. The usual sentimentalities. "I was sorry I missed your junior high school graduation," he said in a slow, hard voice. "I would have loved to come; I'd have given anything to come." "I won medals in science and mathematics," I said very proudly. "That's wonderful." He poured himself a drink and drank it quickly. He shook his head. "Despite what your mother says, I don't like to drink." He took me in his arms. "Some day I'll explain," he said. "You don't have to explain anything," I said, feeling very choked up. He smiled and grew taller. "Don't forget you have a father." "I won't." He took another drink. "Some day I'll explain," he said.

How long have you been back she said

Two days he said

Not very long

No

Were you overseas long

AMERICAN VANGUARD

Two years
Oh she said
Yes he said
Now you're back are you glad
Very glad
I'm glad
I'm gladder
Oh
Yes he said
You have long white thin scars on your chest
I have scars all over my body I had scars on my face too but they
went away
Good
I guess so
What did you do before you joined up
I went to college
Did you like it
Yes
Why
Why not
Are you going back
Better than working
He kissed her in the hollow of her throat
"You look all right," my father said. "I didn't think they'd send
you overseas so fast." "I'll be sailing in a few weeks." "Don't try to
be a hero." "I won't." We sat there at the bar and drank rum with
beer chasers and smoked Mexican cigars. They were good cigars,
and we had been smoking them steadily all night. "I guess I ought
to give you a lot of advice," my father said, "but I can't even run my
own life, let alone give out advice." A knifing silence. "You do what
you want," he said. "Tell everybody else to go to hell; just do what
you want. I haven't got anything to show for my life. I guess it's a
crime to try to find happiness. All I've got is my two sons. I haven't
heard from your brother in months." "He's on board ship; he can't
write." "No." We sat there, not knowing what to say. "Are you still

THE SHAPE OF THE WORLD

interested in electromagnetism?" "Yes." "Good. You'll get some place. Not like me." We switched to whisky sours. It's a woman's drink, but it was a change. "Everybody says I'm a no-good son of a bitch, but I don't think I'm such a terrible guy." "They don't understand." "I've always taken all the blame." "Sure." "Tell them to go to hell," he said. He staggered over to get cigarettes. The fat man at the end of the bar grinned. "Take it easy, kid," the bartender said.

He stroked her hair and blew into her ear she had a lovely fresh face and a nice small figure he pressed against her

How Far Can You Go?

A CHAPTER OF A NOVEL BY RUTH POPOFSKY

IN THE FALL of 1942, Barbara's junior year at Hunter College, she met Connie Harris. Barbara had just been elected president of the French Club, and Connie secretary. With its support of the Free French movement, campaigns for French relief, and dances for French servicemen, the club's activities steadily expanded. Often the two girls had to draw up plans and schedules together.

Connie was Negro. To Barbara this fact seemed almost imperceptible. Connie's eyes were lighter than her own, a deep velvety brown, and her thick hair no blacker nor less softly waved than Barbara's. Her lips were no fuller, nor her nose any wider. But her skin was just a shade or two darker than olive, a glowing honey color.

One Friday afternoon they were writing a bulletin to send out to the club members. "Gosh, I'm tired," Barbara said, stretching her arms. "Why don't you come up my house tomorrow, and we can finish this thing then."

"Okay. That's a good idea." Connie spoke with no distinct southern accent, although she had come to New York from South Carolina with her family at the age of ten. Yet she retained the soft southern enunciation that caresses its vowels.

Mr. and Mrs. Blake liked Connie. They were not disturbed because she was Negro. What for, they reasoned, should they stop Barbara from making friends with different kind girls? In public school she played with that nice Rosie, the Italian girl. All through high school she ate almost from the same plate with her Greek friend, Marina. So what was the harm? That she should God forbid marry a Goy they wouldn't want. But so long it was only girl friends, it was awright. So a nigger was the same thing. You wouldn't marry them, but a girl friend is nothing. And it's not so much you meet

HOW FAR CAN YOU GO?

them, anyway. You don't live in the same neighborhoods. When the niggers started moving into their street a few years ago, they moved away, just like all the other white families. It used to be it was a nice Jewish neighborhood. Now it was a whole *schwarze* street there. But after all, people they are, no? You can talk to them at least. And from collidge if you meet a girl, must be a fine girl, too, even a nigger.

II

Toward evening Mrs. Blake came into Barbara's room, where she found the girls busy at the portable typewriter set up on the night table. "Nu," she said, "it's time awready you should eat something." She smiled at Connie. "You'll have a bite supper with us?"

"Thank you," Connie said. "But I don't want to put you to any trouble."

"What trouble?" Mrs. Blake waved her hand in a little gesture of deprecation. "Saturday night we olney have a light bite. A couple eggs. A can salmon I'll open. So come awready."

They followed her into the kitchen. Mr. Blake was seated in his place. In the center of the table stood a large platter of seeded rolls, a bowl of crisp green lettuce leaves and sliced tomatoes, a dish of canned salmon, and a dish of butter. Mrs. Blake lifted a pan of sizzling scrambled eggs from the stove and divided it on to the four plates set one at each place. She poured four glasses of milk. "So take a fork awready and eat," she said. The silverware lay in a heap on the table.

Mr. Blake took a roll, cut it in half, and buttered it, eating it whole like a sandwich. "Take a slice tomato, a piece lettuce," Mrs. Blake urged. There was silence for a few minutes as everyone ate.

"Your father." Mr. Blake looked up suddenly and spoke with gentle curiosity to Connie. "What line is he in?"

Connie's glance fell. She looked sad. "My father died five years ago."

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"Ah, such a pity!" Mrs. Blake exclaimed. "Your mother I suppose goes to work?" Her voice was full of sympathy.

"No. She hasn't been very well. My brother supports the family."

"You got a lot of sisters and brothers?"

"No, just the two of us."

"He's the oldest?"

"Yes, he's twenty-three. He's three years older than I am."

"He must be some good boy," Mr. Blake said, "that he doesn't leave your mother should work."

"Oh, David is wonderful," Connie said, warmth coming into her eyes. "He's so good to us."

"And what kind work does he do?" Mr. Blake asked.

"He's a stockroom clerk at the Board of Education."

"The Board of Edjication!" echoed Mrs. Blake in awe. "A government job! He also went to collidge?"

"Well, my father died just after David graduated from high school, and he had to start working. But he's been taking some evening courses at City College."

"Connie, you never told me David goes to City!" Barbara joined the conversation. "What's he taking?"

"Oh, he's just had some general courses. But he always wanted to major in music. He plays the piano and he has a beautiful voice. He'll probably never get a degree, though. It's such a long grind at night."

"A fine boy! A fine boy!" Mr. Blake nodded his head in approval. "That he tries so hard, to work by day and study by night."

"We're sort of worried he'll be drafted," said Connie. "I don't know what my mother will do if they take him."

III

After Connie left, Barbara and her parents sat in the living room reading the newspapers.

"She looks to be a nice girl, this Connie," Mr. Blake commented.

"I think she's swell," Barbara said.

HOW FAR CAN YOU GO?

"There's a lot of *schwarze* by you in collidge?"

"There are some Negro girls in most of my classes. The city colleges are the only place where they really have a chance."

Mrs. Blake looked up from the week-end edition of the *Jewish Daily Forward*. "So what's for them so bad?" Enough is enough, she felt. You don't have to take away from nobody a chance they should live, but Barbara, when she picked herself out a friend, was by her awready nothing good enough for them. "Maybe they need a fancier collidge they should go to? Better I should be able to get a good *schwarze* in the house to do a day's work. Right away their children go to collidge, they get independent. A dollar an hour they want, and windows they wouldn't clean, God forbid."

"I suppose you think Negroes aren't good for anything but dirty work," Barbara challenged. "Why shouldn't they get a dollar an hour? Would you scrub somebody else's floors for less?"

"Listen to her," Mrs. Blake retorted. "My teacherke! You're too young you should teach me. I'm still your mother and you still got to learn from me!" She turned her back to Barbara as if to concentrate on the newspaper again.

Blindly leafing through the *Saturday Times*, Barbara said nothing. Her mother, she knew, would treat any further comment of hers with rigid silence, affecting not to hear. This arbitrary closing of discussion always infuriated Barbara.

Restlessly she dropped the *Times* to the floor and stood up. "Well, I guess I'll go to bed," she began tentatively. She hesitated, then added, "Good-night."

"Awright. Good-night," Mr. Blake replied.

With a loud rustling of pages, Mrs. Blake continued reading the *Forward*, yielding no word or gesture to acknowledge her daughter's presence. Barbara shrugged her shoulders as she turned and strode from the room.

In the Early Hours

A SKETCH BY HARRY NIX

WHEN he staggered home an hour ago, he swore he would go directly to bed. But here he sits at the kitchen table, drinking a second pot of coffee, dissolving the sediment of sleep. The clock across the park says ten past four. He drinks coffee at four in the morning, and why? he wonders. He remembers the clean click of the door behind him as he came in, but after that (as how long before?) his actions were muddy, mechanical, like catching the right train, getting off at the right stop, and walking in the right direction home. Nothing is remembered clearly—how, why has he made coffee?—except the clicking door and a newspaper ad in a red circle.

He picks up the paper and reviews the classified ads until he finds the one he has marked. *Typists apply between ten and twelve. Publishing business.* Just what I've been holding out for, he thinks. But does a guy do nothing for six months except swear he'll "get down to writing," while waiting for a substitute of the only work he loves?

Tendrils of air coil through the window and about his face. The heavy-footed cords of the venetian blind dance a staccato on the wall.

The house is dead at four in the morning, but into his half-hearing ears glides the drum-hum of the city. From somewhere, a piano melody murmurs in through the window. On the sidewalk below, footsteps approach and pass with furtive fastness. Soprano laughter leaps up and vanishes in the street. A bus is braking at the corner; layers of groans eddy from the El on Third Avenue. And when the near sounds are gone, there remains the half-audible thunder that streams out of the night. This moment catches the street abandoned: without one person, without one car. All motion is

IN THE EARLY HOURS

heard, but none seen: only the sterility of stone and the sounds of distance and the whirl of life at the end of distance.

He pours more coffee, fits the cup precisely in its liquid circle. He lights a cigarette, feels the breeze steal the smoke from his lips, feels the stir of air around him. Again, the tapping cords against the wall.

Remembering the nights of his childhood years, when he lay in the warmth of his bed and heard frogs croaking, when he awoke at the two o'clock passing of the Joe Brown Express and, with comfort smiling across his face, slipped back into easy sleep, he wonders why he, as a man, knows none of the security the child had known. Was his adolescence tardy, staying late, unfortified? Perhaps insane? No, a crazy man laughs at the world. No humor here. Nor adolescence.

The freshman's assurance that shouted, "I am a writer!" and walked its tightrope proudly lies prostrate in the net of memory. No more conceit. No longer a testimony of talent with every written word. Now, rampant doubts have turned the key against a flaccid will. Now, the tingling torment of an orgasm that will not come.

Another bus is stopping at the corner, and the hot hiss of air brakes calls back a gasp he cannot forget. When he was eighteen years old, he stood at the foot of his mother's bed and saw her die of an eighteen-year-old cancer. Her final breath came loud, fast, was quickly throttled, like the gushing breath of brakes. He had never known such a loss before and he could never know it again, like watching his mother die.

Halfway up the window the blind is fidgeting, and its cords are thumping the wall. The newspaper rattles the ten-o'clock ad on the floor.

The piano drifts back, diluted by space. But over an arc of ten thousand miles another tune comes clearer—"Pagan Love Song," played by a Chinese woman in a Shanghai bar. The hands of a white Russian girl coaxed him over vodka to a room on Avenue Joffre, and when he was drunk she rolled him for three hundred dollars. All she gave was her laughter. The dirty blade of her laughter cut into him and settled there. It filled a vacancy when money was a

AMERICAN VANGUARD

toy. Now, as that night brightens in the puzzle of his past, an unbidden smile receives the coffee, and he wonders where she is.

Hot coffee, the sleep-killer, fiddles at his nerves.

From the sidewalk, the voices of an unseen couple rise distinctly as they pass. The man curses the woman, and when silence answers him he curses her again. A brief paralysis pinches the throat of the young man on the kitchen table. Like a blasphemous echo, the man's voice recalls a day when those words were spoken as a blessing: on a beach in the Philippines, in a February battle. He was running ashore with the first wave when three men fell together. Three friends were killed at once, and a fourth yelled out above the hashed-up noise and fear, "Unlucky sons o' bitches!" That day and others like it, but the most vicious fear always came late, when there was no reason to be afraid. He had tried to put it all on paper many times, but it seemed far away and foreign. His memory was a coward, his imagination fitful and deceptive.

He knows a thousand incidents larger and smaller, more and less magnificent, but equal and the same. But the young man who stares at a red-circled ad on the linoleum feels only hopelessness in the tangle of his talent. Twenty-three years of something is mounting up inside him, but another year and another day will break upon this mess. By what accident in what magic meeting with what stranger at what place will he find his way?

II

Here, alone, the walls of his conscience are more oppressive than the four-walled room around him. In the glare of the kitchen light, he is a prisoner to himself. The freedom of outside darkness provokes the moods that knot his mind. In the night that cools his face there moves the melody of distant whistling. Somewhere a man walks in the channels of the night. The tune he whistles is familiar, but the muddle of his life will not be known. The young man feels kinship with the unseen stranger. The night that separates them binds them. He thinks: Is his story better than mine? Can he tell it?

IN THE EARLY HOURS

Does he try? For all the dullness of my days, are his more colorful? For all the emptiness of my life, is his more crowded? One man walks the streets how many blocks away, little wads of faces snore in their cubbyholes, and patterns of people shift through the black and white hours of the Earth. And in one second the young man on the kitchen table has seen them parading before the grandstand of his mind. In the most unlike pair he has seen the equality of illegible lives. In his loneliness, he is not alone. He knows a sense of affinity.

But here, a cup of cold coffee and a newspaper ad. The teen-age genius remains unproved. Still the guilt of insufficiency, for hunger chews the body that contains it.

The air touches him with damp chill, but inside him, below the cool veneer, deeper than the depth of his flesh, a million fires are pounding for release. But a door is locked against his will, and the will cannot give freedom to the burning of desire. Consciousness alone is a limpid thing, and as it runs an errand into his farthest finger, his deepest toe, the sharpest curve of his gut, it fails to loose the talent rooted there. Before the athletics of his own imprisoned might he is distraught. He hates himself and all the warring opposites that have made him, for the soul that whirls amid confusion makes no quotation marks.

How many hours of his life are spent this way? How often has he sat immobile or moved unconsciously from room to room in the caffeine night?

Suddenly, he hears the last striking of the time from across the park. There is no hint of sleep within him, but he must rest. He turns out the light and goes to his room. Undressing in the dark, he sees the last of the moon as a fog that fills the air. A pane of brightening grey stands in the window, revealing the indefinite lines of buildings huddled together across the street. Dawn has begun. The slow awakening of a concrete city, the creaking of its movements, and its reverberating yawns announce the coming of day.

He falls into bed and tries to relax, but the strings that guide his muscles are tied together in his stomach. He wishes and waits for the drug of sleep. He sees the window lightening, hears the

AMERICAN VANGUARD

themselves. "What does this mean? Why this mechanical, blatant passion? Is this not a coarse unwieldy monster, blustering his way forward against the millions of sensitive sorrows of this world, attempting to browbeat them into a blasé, dull forgetfulness? Can it succeed? Was not this the laughter of Pilate when he ordered the massacre of the Innocents? Was not this Nero's fearful cackle when he imagined the faces of the Christians who would be charged with the arson? Then again, despite its volcanic cloud of gayness, was it not merely an inverted expression of a gigantic Despair?"

I looked more closely. The hands who had made the coarse inhuman dummy, which rolled its mop of locks and whiskers from side to side, opening its dark toothless mouth intermittently, had not forgotten to provide the gargoyle with a plausible pretext for his joy. The heavy hands had pried off one papier-mâché boot, had exposed a roly-poly-toed bare foot, and had posted a popeyed bent gnome, with a feather, to tickle the accommodatingly upturned sole. But this façade could fool only those who were accustomed to be fooled, whose greatest misfortune was that they were too blinded by their small sorrows to recognize the prototype of all Grief in its most obvious disguise. Only the little boy must have felt through this façade, must have experienced the pressure of this mocking, gigantic despair upon his tender heart. . . .

I found myself echoing the child's intuition. Like some forgotten organ in a ruined church responding to the winds, my mind poured forth an inchoate murmur of complaints.

"He laughs at your illusions about your own red blood! He sees that it is not red, that it is *green* with the poisons of self-fear. . . . He laughs because you think your blood is red. . . .

"Perhaps. But again, he is laughing because he is inanimate, because he may never see someone he loves being burnt in an incinerator and made into candle tallow. He was not made either to see or to love, only to laugh at those who must endure vision and charity. . . .

"Yes! He is immune to all social diseases, and even as he has reason to laugh because he cannot love, he has another reason to

THE LAUGHING SANTA

laugh, because he cannot hate. The ragged banners of poverty mean nothing to him; class boundaries, color lines, multicolored Chauvinisms, and cephalic indices cannot affect his nature, cannot leave his cogs and gears and scratching needle with any lifelong traumata. Is not that reason enough to gloat so noisily over the flesh staring at him through the glass? It will be a long time yet before flesh learns to be as insensible as he is. . . .

"More than anything he is laughing at childhood. He knows it is fragile, that it may not survive the pressure of the hates which shall encompass and invade it in due time. He knows that the vast and deep delicacies of a tiny flowering soul will not long endure the brutal manipulations of it by the Social Aesthetique of mistrust and materialism. . . .

"He laughs because he sees the hideous masks behind which we all cower; he recognizes these masks because he himself is nothing but Mask. He laughs, however, because he knows he is a Mask, and because the faces leering at him through the pane do not know who, or what, is a mask. . . ."

It was time for me to tear myself away from this display of spuriousness and mockery. Turning my back to the window, I caught the words of the wizened father comforting his little boy. "You see? See the little elf with the cap? See the feather? He is tickling Santa; he is making Santa laugh! Don't be afraid! It's nothing to be afraid of!"

. . . "GhaaaaAAAAh ha ha hahahahhagh! Ghaoh, Ghoch ho ho ho hohoho . . . ha ha hah hah!"

The little boy buried his face in his father's collar once more. I walked off with a strangely mixed feeling. For I had seen the little boy smile wanly at his father's reassurances, had felt that he was accepting his father's evaluations on the strength of the flesh-and-blood warmth that was his father. I had actually witnessed how the child was forced to disinherit his original fear.

And this fear, cold and burrowing, had sought—and found refuge . . .

In me.

Notes from Washington Square

A SKETCH BY HILLEL FRIMET

WHEN I went to see an acquaintance one summer evening, she had a visitor, whom she introduced as Henry Moison, a retired civil service employee from New Hampshire.

Mister Moison got up from his chair and advanced toward me. "Nice evening—" he said, taking hold of my hand. Behind his shaded glasses his eyelids fluttered like the wings of a tortured moth, and his eyes floated away from my stare.

My hostess poured coffee, and we all sat down. Then sadness took hold of me, and I sat staring at a wall.

"Life is wonderful! . . ." I suddenly heard Moison say. I turned my head to stare at him. He was bending over his cup, taking a swallow of coffee, and I heard it go down inside him as if sucked in by his stomach. "Yes siree—it sure is!"

I stood up. "Excuse me—I must go."

I was at the door when he came up and put a hand on my shoulder. "You're unhappy, aren't you? Why are you unhappy?"

II

Without answering I opened the door and went out. I walked toward Washington Square, taking long strides, hearing his steps behind me. The cries of peddlers, then his steps again. When I reached the wading pool in the center of the Square, I sat down on its rim, leaned my elbows on my knees, and watched the rotation.

He came across the asphalt. He came up close and stood over

NOTES FROM WASHINGTON SQUARE

me. "You haven't answered me—why are you unhappy?" he persisted.

I kept silent, and in his embarrassment he took to cleaning his fingernails. One with the other, first this one, then that one, over and over, making little clicking noises. I listened to the clicking, feeling a prodding in my head.

"Why do you pursue me?" I shouted to the whole Square. "I want no jabber about that happiness of yours, that religion without churches, I don't go for it at all!"

Strolling couples stopped and turned around. They heard my shout; they wanted to hear more. They have so little to say to themselves, and their fear of themselves is so agonizing, they must have yells, loud yells, the louder the better. With rattles and noisemakers, glass tinkling and paper hats, they're at their best. They can whoop their loudest then, for all the money they have, to hide their misery from themselves and from each other their hate. They stood there cocking their ears, grinning mocking grins, showing all their hate out in the open, all the time holding on to one another's hands, trying to retie their belly knots. It's their love, that holding hands of theirs while they hate all the rest; it's all they can do.

The sky over the pool covered us all: the strollers, Moison, and me, and held us down where we were. The strollers with their hate, Moison with his clicking, and me, with myself. There was no difference.

III

Moison drew away from me. He shut his eyes, opened them, and shut them again. "I . . . I . . . want you to be happy—" he stammered.

The prodding in my head was increasing. Why didn't he go home and lock and bolt his doors? Didn't he see our watchers all around us signaling to each other? Didn't he see they were closing in on us? His feebleness wouldn't stop them. Oh, no! An old man they hate more than a young man. He is ugly, they say, and should

AMERICAN VANGUARD

be done away with. He should be taken to a cemetery at once, undressed, washed, and rouged, to make him look all pretty again, so they can forget their own death nudging them, and think it's something they ate.

"Where in this spinning is your happiness?" I shouted to them. I looked them right into their half-closed eyes. "Where in this lovelessness and serfdom is it?"

My shout delighted them. This was no ordinary yell; this was the yell of a madman . . . and there is nothing more amusing to crowds than to watch a man they consider mad. They would like nothing better at such times than to fasten a train of tin cans on to him. He is a spectacle worth ten of their movie plays, and free, absolutely, not even a nickel for the subway.

"He's crazy!" cried a girl with greasy lips, tugging at her girdle. "He scares me . . ." She pressed her girdle up against her partner.

"Oh!—He's mad! . . ." screamed another one with white paper curlers in her hair. "He'll kill us!" She brought her head down with a jerk, and all but one of her curlers came loose and glided up into the air. They circled about her head out of her reach, her last remaining curler reflecting the Neon Icons of Sixth Avenue taverns.

"You're on fire!" I yelled to her. "Look out!"

"FIRE!" screamed the couples, and vaulted over the rim of the pool, knocking Moison's hat to the sidewalk. They sat down on the asphalt floor and began to sing the latest songs.

From the Empire State Building a siren blew a tune.

"YANKEE DOODLE . . . DOODLE-DE-DA . . . DOODLE-DE-DA . . . DOODLE-DE-DA . . . ÜBER ALLES . . . ÜBER ALLES . . . DOODLE-DE-DA . . . DA-DA . . ."

"I must go back to work," said Moison. "They're calling me."

IV

A girl came out of a window and crawled straight up the side of the building to the highest point of the steeple. She stood up on one leg and balanced herself like a ballerina. Around her neck

NOTES FROM WASHINGTON SQUARE

she wore a white garland and around each of her breasts, which were like slowly rolling teardrops, a stainless steel ring with a pink ribbon hanging from it.

"Ahhh! . . ." sighed the girl with the paper curler. "*Isn't she beeeautiful—?*"

"Shut up!" said her friend. "I wanna see the show."

Six firemen connected sections of ladders until they reached half-way up to the girl on the steeple, and a man with a saxophone under his arm climbed up to the last rung of the ladders. He wore black pants, a brown shirt, a scarlet tie, and a white linen coat. He put the saxophone to his lips and blew a little introductory toot. Everyone became quiet. The couples in the pool stopped their singing, Moison stopped his clicking, and even the vegetable peddlers on Thompson Street were still.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the man said, "the time has come."

"Isn't he wonderful—?" said the girl with the curler. Her friend didn't answer her.

The man put the saxophone to his lips again, and the girl on the steeple raised her skirt just a little, showing blue hairy thighs, and they began,

"O, Johnny, o, Johnny, how you can llllove. . . . O, Johnny, o, Johnny . . ."

All at once they stopped right in the middle of their song and screamed, "FIRE!—FIRE!"

This took the couples in the pool by surprise, but they quickly recovered and again started to sing the latest tunes. Thousands of people came together shouting, "FIRE!—FIRE!—What's the score?"

"THREE FOR FOUR . . . FOUR FOR THREE . . ." answered the man with the saxophone.

V

Down Fifth Avenue came the whole Fire Department. Vehicle after vehicle, first hooks, then ladders, hoses, pumps, bells, it

AMERICAN VANGUARD

stretched along the boulevard. Out in front, in a car with a glass top, rode the fire chief. On his red hat he wore a large union button. At equal intervals he made a gesture of shaking hands with the people at the curbs and hanging out of house windows. Each time he pressed his hands together and shook them up and down, the people answered him,

“HOORRRRAH!—HOORRRRAH! . . . YANKEE-DOODLE-DE-DA . . . ÜBER ALLES IS OUR SOLACE. . . . DA-DA-DA-DA . . . DA-DA-DA . . .”

The leading hook reached out over the arch and down into the pool. It took hold of the singers in there, swung them three times around the arch, then set them down on the fire chief's glass roof.

The chief stood up on his seat and put his face to the glass. “Aha—” he said, “so you're all here. That's good. Now I'll tell you what I want you to do—I want you all to go home now, get a good rest, and report back to me tomorrow. Tomorrow we start working on the fire. It's a big thing, this fire. . . . Everything's burnin'. But we can't start workin' today 'cause I'm a union man—see?” He put a finger in his mouth and felt his teeth. “I'm a union man—get me?” Then he motioned to the hook to set the couples down again.

Moison moved closer to me. “You're wrong—you know that? The people in New Hampshire are so kindly . . . so sweet . . . so—so—neighborly . . . how can you say there is no Love?”

The strollers were nearing Sixth Avenue, singing the latest hit tunes, all of them singing together. Later on, they'll listen to the same tunes in a tavern along their way. Fast, stimulating numbers, at first, which will make the men whack each other on the back and cry, “Solid, Jackson! Hot off the griddle!” and the women squirm under their tight girdles; then soft, dreamy, nostalgic melodies, full of tender sentiments, which will sadden them all. And as they listen, each with his own pain, they'll stare at the bartender's molded face and at the admonition above him to “Keep Smiling,” stir, and say, “Give us another shot, Mack.”

NOTES FROM WASHINGTON SQUARE

VI

"How can you say there is no Love?" Moison repeated. There was a challenge in his question, the challenge of doubt. Toward their end all men doubt.

"Nature is a great old mother," he kept on. He was asking himself to believe it. "So peaceful. . . . Why—when you go swimming up my way, little fish tickle your toes." He gave my knees a slap and chuckled, "They tickle your toes, he, he, he . . ."

That was true. Little fish tickle. That's all the small ones can do.

"Come on up and stay with me a while," he said after a pause.

But all the rest were lies. There is no peace in this twirling, and no love. Only pity. Pity for ourselves and for all the others.

IV

THEY SAY THE WAR IS OVER

The Fall of a Southern Ego

A SHORT STORY BY HERBERT KALISMAN

WHEN we first heard that jeep come roaring through our Porac camp area, we ran to our tent opening and shouted, "Stupid sonofabitch," at the driver. Doc and I watched the vehicle miss the first turn and bound across the Philippine rice paddy. It was dry season, and the wallow was only a shallow mudhole. As the jeep plunged into the sinkhole, the engine roared protestingly and then whined to a halt.

Before Doc and I reached the carabao wallow, a group of GI's had already extricated the unconscious Willie Reb. His jeep was up-ended in the stinking mush of the wallow. Willie was slime covered. As Doc and I bent over his heavily breathing chest, the pungent odor of Panay rum mingled with the mixture of mud and carabao dung. His face and hair were turning grey as the muck slowly dried. Willie's tongue appeared rhythmically from between his lips at breath-slobbering intervals.

Doc signaled the two aid men. They rolled Reb onto a litter and trudged back toward the medic tent. The Flight Surgeon and I followed.

"There goes your Flight Leader," Doc shook his head and sighed. "Your Confederate brother sure had a load on. So far all I can see is that he's damn lucky. Nothing seemed to be broken."

"The lovin' rebel won't fly any more, I guess."

Doc looked at me surprised. "He'll be flying soon's he recovers. You junior birdmen don't lose your wings so easily. What the hell, he just had a jag on. They'll give him the 104th, and he'll lose a half-month's pay. That's all."

"Maybe, but I'm not following Willie Reb any more. He's lost

AMERICAN VANGUARD

more than half a month's pay. I can't follow him into combat any more, Doc. . . ."

We stopped outside of the hospital tent. Doc was waiting for the rest of my explanation. I told him I was going back to our tent. After he was through doping up Willie, he could come back and I'd tell him a story of the decline and fall of a Southern ego. "Bring some GI alcohol, Doc. We've got some Aussie lemon mix. Might as well limber up the tongue a bit. I'm not scheduled to fly today."

The mix was all prepared, and when I saw Doc walking across the area with his canteen cup, I sneaked out the back flap and into the CO's tent. He was fat-cattin' in Manila, and his bunk, the exec, was playing the big shot down in the 32nd Division Officer's Club. The tent was empty, and the ice cubes in the refrigerator were ours for the asking. By the time I returned with the loot, Doc had the "prescription" accurately concocted. He sipped the mixture. The cluck, wink, and thumb-forefinger circle attested perfection.

We agreed that cracked ice was preferable to cubes. They were wrapped in a clean hanky and pounded into snow with the bottom of a canteen. Doc stirred the ice into the can that held the drinks. The sweat mist formed on the outside of the can. We took our cups with us and reclined on our sacks. The can of drinks was on the floor within reach.

"Now, what's the deal?" he asked. Doc heeled off his moccasins.

II

I squirmed until my rump slid into the broken-in depression in the canvas of my cot. "Willie and I are both from Atlanta, you know. I never knew him personally before the war, but I knew of him. His family is rich. Got plenty of dough and still scooping it in. They were among the few old aristocrats who were able to enter industry and still keep family tradition. The only thing Willie and I have in common is that we're both Southerners and we both jockey P-47's. The guys in our outfit lump us together because we're both rebels. I guess outside of you he was my closest buddy.

FALL OF A SOUTHERN EGO

"I was just another ordinary Joe before the Army gave me glamour. I got through high school and managed to find a fairly good job as a mill machinist, but if I ever tried to crash Willie's house, prewar, I would have been tossed on my fanny. But still, in our outfit, Willie and I hit it off. He's a damn good Flight Leader, but that's all. He's so lovin' spoiled otherwise that he's helpless when it comes to making his own way. Cuts a fine, handsome figure, though. Southern charm, gentlemanly manner, that drawl . . . the way he says, 'Mah name is William Swann, but you can call me Willeh Reb.' I guess I got taken in just like the crackers did before me who followed Willie's ancestors in the War Between the States.

"Willie's married, too. Ever see the picture of his wife and daughter? The kid's pretty, and the wife is out of this world. Society belle. I could never figure out why Willie seemed to take such a delight in the shack jobs we had on our Sidney leaves. I don't mean I was surprised at a married man doing the dirty deed. That's natural when you've been away from the stuff so long, but he seemed to put his whole heart and soul into it. Hell, to most of us it was just another piece, but to Willie it was a complete courtship and seduction.

"He used to look forward to those ten-day leaves. When we left New Guinea and hit the Philippines, the leaves stopped. Willie figured that to be the greatest treachery of the war."

III

Doc refilled his cup. I stopped long enough to do the same. The ice was beginning to melt, but there were still flakes of it floating in the GI Sour.

"The rest of us grew accustomed to the loss of leaves. We had the club at Casa Dolores, and little by little each joker got himself a Filipino broad. Not Willie. He said Filipinos were just nigras Pacific style, and he couldn't see how we could bring them into our clubs and sport them as if they were lily-white belles at a cotillion.

"My shack job is Maria, the girl who does all the fancy embroidery work on those souvenirs the guys send home. Willie always called

AMERICAN VANGUARD

me down for giving her the play. These guys are all Yankees, he'd say, those nigger-lovers don't know any better, but you're a rebel like I am. How can you do it? I told him my longings knew no prejudices and my genitals were nondiscriminatory.

"At first, Willie seemed to be angry with me. He'd only talk to me when he had something official to say. Soon the coolness wore off. He began to ask me what went on at the club. I told him if he weren't such a lovin' fool, he'd drop around the club and see for himself. He began to envy my social life. Each time Maria invited me to her home for chicken fry or fiesta he'd wait up and get all the details from me when I came back. Finally, I figured, pride was taking a back seat for desire. Willie was never one for letting inhibitions hold him for too long.

"Maria has a kid sister. The kid is eighteen and stacked proper. She doesn't have Maria's impish smile and fun-loving ways, but she's got a certain dusky wistfulness about her. The kid is darker than Maria. When her sister first brought her around to our camp, I tried to get Willie next to her. He acted coy as hell. She kept giving him those Bacall looks, and for the first time the smooth-talking rebel was at a loss for words.

"After they left, Willie kept pumping me about how to court one of these Filipos. He had to have the full measure. The rest of us could just manage on a physiological level, but Willie had to play the whole game. I promised to take him with me the next time I called on Maria, and for the first time Willie made his bid to cross the color line.

"Willie's love campaign went poorly. He wooed with chocolates, undershirts, GI shoes, jeep rides. No go. It was quite a blow. None of the rest of the squadron noticed it, but I did. The others were too busy flying and funning around. You never did either, but you were never one for messing into our private affairs. You should, you know. You were a pediatrician in civilian life, and you ought to keep in practice. The closest the Army has to care of children is care of fighter pilots.

"Willie mooned around. He was putting the pressure on the kid.

FALL OF A SOUTHERN EGO

Seems she never saw *Gone with the Wind* and was not impressed by Southern aristocracy. Out of all fairness to Willie, I don't see why she kept turning him down. His Van Heusen features were always a natural gimmick for trapping the ladies. What started as condescension on his part was developing into resistance on hers. Willie was rapidly losing faith in himself. All his gifts were useless. His stay in the Philippines thus far was virginal. The frustration grew into an obsession. Willie wasn't flying the way he used to. His napalm runs were way off, and one day up in the Villa Verde Trail he almost hit our own troops with jellied gasoline. I spoke to him afterward and told him a good bed-mate wasn't worth what he was paying for her. He told me to mind my own goddamned business.

"Centuries of Southern pride were being peeled off layer by layer. I even think Willie began promising her he would take her back to America with him. He never bargained so hard in Bondi as he was here in Porac. One evening after Maria and I were dancing up at the Casa Dolores, we returned to the house and found Willie and the kid on the porch. Maria's place is the pride of the Barrio. It's really a stateside house with plumbing and all. Her father is the local *avocato*, and his father before him. The kid ran to tell Maria the news. Willie had shown her pictures of his estates back home and had promised to take her there after the war.

"Willie's behavior improved a bit after that. Although he'd almost sacrificed the core of generations of snobbery and bigotry for the satisfaction of a sexual whim, he was getting it regularly and seemed pleased. But he wasn't the old Willie. When I defended Arnall's actions after we read the Georgia papers, he used to accuse me of joining the Yankee nigger-lovers. He still snorted at my arguments, but that was all. No more tirades of white supremacy. I should have been pleased, but his apathy made me apprehensive.

"I forgot about Willie after a while. We just flew together and perhaps had chow together once in a while, but socially he would drag the kid off with his jeep and mess around somewhere in another Barrio. He still couldn't bring himself to face the rest of us with a 'dinge' after preaching so long about rebels and damyankees.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

Not that it made much difference to us. Even I was able to overcome the slight stigma. I guess Negro hating is a sort of luxury you can indulge in only if you give up all other activities and let that warp your life. If you never accept it as a life policy, you don't feel empty when you abandon it.

IV

"Then last night it happened." The cup was empty again. Doc and I both ducked for the can at the same time. The ice was gone. There was just enough left for a quarter cup each. The stuff was full of lemon pulp and pips and lukewarm by now. Doc slugged his down. I followed suit. . . . "What happened?" he asked as he plopped down on the sack. I remained sitting on the edge of the cot.

"I wasn't going to Maria's. I was going to spend the evening catching up on my back mail. Just about to start when Maria came into the tent. You were away holding evening sick-call. She was out of breath. She had run all the way from Porac, two miles uphill. Willie was at her house. The kid had skipped out earlier with another soldier and Willie was waiting for them to return. He had his *pistole* with him . . . was all I could get from her. I borrowed the Ordnance jeep and we high-tailed it for Porac. Sure enough, Willie was there with his forty-five in a shoulder holster. He was rebel mad.

"I got the full story. That afternoon the kid told him she didn't love him any more. She had another soldier boy-friend before he came along. The only reason she strung along with him was that he promised her all the good things in America. The other soldier friend came to see her again, and she discovered that she loves him better.

"Willie had returned to the camp and brooded awhile. He decided his honor had to be avenged. Can you imagine that? You'd think he was acting out a part in *So Red the Rose*. By the time he returned with his 'avenger,' the kid and her date had gone. He was going to sweat out her return.

"I kept vigil with him. He seemed to have flipped his lid. Can you

FALL OF A SOUTHERN EGO

imagine how Reb felt? He'd gone all the way with this inferior 'thing,' and she'd thrown him over. I tried to talk him out of his sidearms, but he called me a goddamned renegade Southerner and stormed off the porch to hide in the hedgery. Maria kept me company on the porch. She was nervous, and so was I, but I tried to reassure her that nothing was going to happen.

"An hour or so later a truck pulled up the road. It stopped in front of the house. Here it comes. I saw the kid jump down. The driver got out the other side. I jumped down the porch steps and ran over to Willie's hiding place. He crouched there, his forty-five ready and cocked. The kid ran around the front of the truck to meet her lover halfway. He grabbed her there in the headlight gleam and picked her clear off the ground to kiss her. He was the tallest, broadest, most powerful-looking Negro buck I have seen in a long time.

"Willie saw the same thing I did. Maria screamed to the kid, and I knocked the gun from Willie's hand. It wasn't necessary. He wasn't going to shoot, anyway. Instead he collapsed on my crouch-formed lap and sobbed. He cried like a baby, Doc. For five minutes, it seemed, he lay there and cried. I was at a loss. I'd never handled a crying man. I tried to console him. He stopped suddenly, pushed me over, and ran toward his jeep. It was the last I'd seen of him till they fished him out of the wallow.

"See, Doc, Willie lost more than a half-month's pay. He lost more than a good bed-mate. A guy like him gets so wrapped up in a tradition that when the wrapping is gone there's nothing left. I'm smarter than my cracker ancestors were. I won't follow Willie Reb any more."

Thumbs Up

A SHORT STORY BY JOHN WEINER

WHEN Tommy was five years old, his mother accidentally locked him in a closet. He was looking for a rubber ball which he had hidden in the closet several days before. His mother came by and slammed the door without seeing him. Tommy merely exclaimed, "Oh, Dickens!" and switched on the light so that he could continue the search. He found the ball in one of his mother's old shoes, and triumphantly put it in his pocket. He put his hand on the knob of the door, but it did not turn; it was locked from the outside.

Tommy was not at all disturbed. He yelled, in a loud but respectable English voice, "Mother, oh, Mother, I'm locked in the closet. Come let me out." There was no answer. He called again. Silence. He was alone in the house.

Tommy had never been in such a situation. Never had his mother failed to come to him when he was in trouble. He yelled again, but this time there was a break in his voice, and he began to cry. He wasn't frightened. There was a light in the closet, and anyway, he wasn't afraid of the dark. But he felt suddenly lonely, as he had felt the day when he was taken in to say good-bye to his sick father. His father had started to tell him his favorite story about the very bad queen who threw a noble knight into her dungeon and kept him there for many years. But in the middle of the story, before the knight was saved, his father coughed very violently, and the doctor nodded to Tommy's mother, who took him from the room. She told him that he would never see his father again because he was going away forever; he was going to die. Tommy had known what death was ever since his dog had died; so the feeling of loneliness, though still very dreadful, was not new. But now in the closet, his

THUMBS UP

mother, always near when he was in trouble, was not there to comfort him. His loneliness had a great strength. There was no love to combat it. There were only four solid walls to keep him forcibly from his mother. Never had he been so restricted. If his mother sent him up to his room when he was bad, he always had been able to amuse himself by looking through the window at the people in the street. In the closet, there were no windows.

Tommy had a vivid imagination. In the closet there was nothing to occupy his mind and prevent his fancy from running wild. Never, never, he thought, will I get out of here. Mother has gone away forever, like Father, and there is no one to let me out. Doggie is dead; so he can't bark and tell the neighbors. No one will ever find me. No one will ever find me. And then suddenly, a new danger entered his head. What if the walls fall in on me? They'll crush me. They'll crush me. Then, a new version. The walls won't fall in, but maybe God doesn't want a closet here. Maybe He's going to make the closet disappear. The walls will close in on me. They'll close in on me, and I won't be able to breathe. The walls will choke me and I won't be able to breathe.

Tommy was sobbing passionately now. He lay down on the floor and hid his head in his arms so that he wouldn't see the walls pressing down on him. He was sure they would crush him. Hours later his mother found him there on the floor crying. "Stop it, stop it, please, please stop it." It was a long time before she could quiet him. For many weeks he wouldn't permit himself to be left alone in a room. He used to wake up in the night screaming.

After a few years, however, he only faintly remembered the incident, and he was once again able to lead his normal boy's life.

In 1940, when Tommy was ten years old, Hitler was bombing London. The first time Tommy went down into an air-raid shelter, the old fear of the closet returned with a new violence. The God of the closet, who threatened to close in the walls and make the closet disappear, had now become the plane in the sky capable of dropping bombs that Tommy knew could easily blow in the walls of the shelter. He began to cry. His mother had to hold him forcibly

AMERICAN VANGUARD

in her arms to keep him from running out into the street. She was able to quiet him a little, but he kept sobbing, "What if a bomb hits right on top of us? What if a bomb hits right on top of us?"

His mother stroked his hair and soothed him. She told him to close his eyes. She said that he must be brave. You're an English boy, you know. You mustn't let those German cowards frighten you. They can't hurt you, if you don't let them. Close your eyes now, and clench your fists, and keep your thumbs up, as Mr. Churchill says we should. That's a good boy, now, clench them hard. They can't hurt you as long as you keep those thumbs up.

Tommy held his fists closed tightly, and his thumbs stuck out. This was magic, he thought, that would keep the bombs away. A bomb couldn't reach him as long as he kept his thumbs up. Hadn't his mother said so? And Mr. Churchill, too! Thumbs up. Thumbs up. Thumbs up.

The raids came every day. His mother and he shared a two-family shelter with their neighbors. Tommy was always frightened, but he found comfort in his thumbs. The days went by, and the walls never fell. He gained confidence, but he never dared unclench his fists, or let down his thumbs while he was in the air-raid shelter.

One day, Tommy went shopping with his mother. She left him to wait outside while she went into a department store to buy an apron. Suddenly he heard the hateful siren. He didn't know what to do without his mother. A policeman came by and whisked him down the street to the entrance of a public air-raid shelter, where a soldier told the warden he would take care of Tommy. The soldier took Tommy's hand and led him down the stairs. They sat down on one of the benches. From the time the siren had sounded, Tommy had been too frightened to speak. Here in this strange shelter his fear grew worse. He had never been in any other shelter than the one at home, and always with his mother. The strange walls brought on the old panic he had almost learned to conquer. He forgot the magic in his thumbs. The walls were big, and made of cement and heavy iron that could easily crush him; or he would be buried alive under tons and tons of broken wall, and suffocate to death. He must

THUMBS UP

get out. He must get out, and to his mother, before it was too late.

He jumped up from the bench and ran for the stairs. The soldier ran after him and caught him and brought him back to the bench, Tommy screaming, "Let me go, let me go."

"Here now, son," the soldier said. "You mustn't be frightened, you know. Thumbs up, now, boy, thumbs up, you know."

Thumbs up, of course. He had forgotten his magic trick. How silly of him not to remember. Thumbs up; if it worked at home, why shouldn't it work here?

"Thumbs up," he said to the soldier, and smiled, the tears still rolling down his face. "I'd forgotten, you see."

He formed the gesture with his hands, and held it. The walls still looked strange and ominous; so he closed his eyes and imagined himself with his mother. He was all right now. His magic was working. Soon the all-clear signal would sound, and he would find his mother, and they would go home and have supper. It was going to be a surprise supper, his mother had said. He remembered he had begged her to tell him what it was. But she said he must wait. He smiled as he thought of their little game. As if he didn't know what it was going to be. A surprise supper always meant his favorite dish. It didn't matter much what the main course was; it was the dessert that counted, and that was cherry pie. With his eyes closed he could see it all pictured in his mind. He would go home with Mother and help her set the table. Then, they would be seated and his mother would begin, "Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for this, our daily bread." And Tommy would add, to himself, of course, "And thank you, too, dear God, for cherry pie." It was his own private little joke. He once said it out loud. His mother told him it was sinful to speak to God about his selfish little likes. But he didn't think it a sin. Cherry pie was so much better than his daily bread. So after that he always thanked God in private when he knew that cherry pie was to be dessert. He meant it, but it always struck him as being somehow funny. He smiled to himself now in the air-raid shelter.

Then his mother would continue, "And thank you, Father, for keeping us safe from the bombs that fall around us. Amen." He

once was going to ask Mother why God let the bombs fall at all. He thought better of it, however, because she never liked to have him say anything when she spoke to God. They would probably have boiled beef and potatoes. His mother would tell him to eat more slowly, because she would think that he was hurrying his food in order to get to the surprise more quickly. He would eat very slowly. It was better that way. The slower he ate, the hungrier he was when he ate the cherry pie, and the hungrier he was, the better it tasted. Finally he would be finished. His mother would clear the dishes. She would stand over him and smile down at him. He would try to look uninterested. "Tommy," she would say. "Yes, Mother?" "Guess what the surprise is." By that time he wouldn't be able to act any more, and he would smile back happily at her and say, "I'll wager it isn't ice cream, nor trifle pudding, nor apple dumplings, nor apple pie; but I'll wager it's cher—"

A terrific explosion made Tommy's eardrums ache. He opened his eyes just in time to see one of the fearful walls toppling down on him. For a split second Tommy was back in the closet again, and God was closing in the walls to make the closet disappear. A shriek froze in his throat. . . .

The firemen and volunteer rescue workers were removing the debris within five minutes after the explosion. After a few minutes of digging they reached Tommy. His chest was smashed in by a heavy block of cement. A trickle of blood ran down his chin from the corner of his mouth. His hands lay open; his thumbs were limp. They removed him gently.

First Encounter

A SKETCH BY THOMAS K. MARTIN

HE HAD been shocked at the news. And when the first few days had passed, he perceived that it was more than shock; with a great deal of distaste he discovered that he felt there was some injustice in the board's action. After allowing him to pursue his studies at the seminary throughout the war, and assuring him that a man of his uncertain health and delicate physique would not be bothered by further examinations, how could they make this decision? But why should he feel that it was unjust? Nothing is unjust, he said to himself, and this, too, should be accepted as other and worse blows had been in the past.

The man ahead of him on the line moved to one side, and he looked down at a thin, tense-faced girl seated behind a large, black typewriter. He watched the girl curiously while she inserted a long yellow card in the machine and then looked up at him impassively. She waited for a moment, during which they looked at each other in silence.

"All right, Mister," she said. "Last name, please?"

"Yes, Miss. It's Soly. . . . S O L Y."

"First name and middle name, please?" she asked, while typing his last name on the card, not looking at either him or the typewriter.

"Ah . . . the first name is rather difficult," he began. "It's Isaiah . . . I S A I A H, and the middle name is Carlos, C A R . . ."

The girl broke in on the spelling. "Just one name at a time, if you don't mind. What's the first name?"

"Isaiah," he replied. "I S A I A H."

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"Gawd," said the girl, "more foreigners in the Army! The middle name, please?"

"Carlos," he said, spelling it out.

"Gawd," the girl repeated, "I thought it was going to be Abraham Lincoln!"

When she had finished typing the name, she glanced up at him. "Religion, please?"

"Christian," he replied in a low, imperceptible voice.

"What?" the girl asked impatiently. "I didn't hear it."

"Christian," he repeated, a bit louder.

"You mean Protestant, don't you?"

"No. I mean Christian," he said firmly.

"Look, Mister," the girl replied, "in the Army there's four kinds of people—Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Atheists. Which are you?"

"None of those," he said. "I'm a Christian. Don't you have any Christians in the Army?"

"Now, look, Mister. I don't want to seem fresh or anything, but I've lived in this here country all of my life, and I *know* there's only four kinds of people here. They're Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Atheists. So what are you?"

"I'm awfully sorry, young lady," he answered, "but I've been a Christian since I was twenty-three years old, and I'm not going to stop being one because the Army doesn't recognize them. Now you just write down Christian on that card, and I'll be responsible to anybody who thinks differently of my belief."

"Oh, no, I won't," the girl said. "I gotta put my initials in the corner of this card, and if I make any mistakes, I get a demerit on my efficiency card downstairs. Just wait here a minute, Mister. I'll get the Lieutenant to straighten this out."

The girl slipped from the stool and strode with the spirit of an avenger toward a lieutenant lolling at the far side of the room. After a whispered conference, during which she shook her head violently and pointed out Isaiah for the lieutenant, they returned to the counter together. The girl sat down again as the lieutenant spoke:

FIRST ENCOUNTER

"O.K., Buddy, what's the trouble here? Don't you like the way we run this place? What are you, a wise guy?"

Isaiah winced under the abrupt attack and hesitated before recovering himself. "I'm awfully sorry, Lieutenant, but we are having what I believe to be a very foolish misunderstanding, this young lady and I. She inquired for my religion to type on that card. I have assured her at least three times that I'm a Christian, and she denies that there is any such thing in our country. I don't think it very tolerant of the Army to deny that there are any Christians in America."

"Look, feller," the lieutenant replied, "you're not in the Army yet, so we'll talk man to man. The Army doesn't say there aren't any Christians in this country. It's just that on our records we use three letters: *P* for Protestants, *C* for Catholics, and *H* for Hebrews. Anything else we don't have any initials for, and if you don't have one of these initials on your identification tags, when you get killed, the Chaplain won't know what kind of prayers to say over your grave. Now, which do you want?"

"I don't want to seem impertinent, but even from your explanation, Lieutenant, it's still apparent to me the Army doesn't recognize the existence of Christians. After all, those three letters only take into consideration two sects of Christianity and the Hebrews. I can't understand how the American Army has ever come to such a distinction."

"I can see that you're just a wise guy at that," the lieutenant said, "and I'm not going to get sucked into any arguments about religion. That's like arguing about politics. Now, which do you want: *C* or *P*, or nothing at all? Or maybe you want an *H*?"

"You don't give me any choice," Isaiah replied, "and I don't want to trouble you further, so just leave the answer blank."

"Oh, no!" the girl at the typewriter cried. "We can't do that, Lieutenant! They say downstairs that you always have to fill it in, even if it's only NONE under the religion space on the card."

"O.K., then," the lieutenant said. "Put NONE in the answer space. That O.K., feller?"

AMERICAN VANGUARD

“Yes,” Isaiah answered with an audible sigh, “none is better than nothing at all.” And he thought to himself that he wasn’t even in the Army yet, and already had lost one thing which he had believed could never be taken from him. He leaned against the counter and braced himself for the girl’s next question.

Curfew

A SHORT STORY BY LEON HOROWITZ

THE small Negro swung jauntily down the road leading to the port. The steep decline of the winding cobblestone street put added inches into his dapper stride; the brisk night wind sweeping toward the Mediterranean fluttered the long jacket of his "zoot" suit, so that he had a sensation of almost floating along on air. In addition, the liberal portions of the French cognac, which two packs of Chesterfields had procured for him, flushed his senses giddily. As he sauntered along, he held his wide-brimmed pearl-grey hat in his hand to bathe his brow in the cooling breeze.

A wraithlike form suddenly took shape in the darkness, appearing from behind the trunk of a gnarled palm tree. A tingle of apprehension ruffled the Negro. When a closer glance revealed the figure in the white sheet as an Arab, the Negro muttered contemptuously under his breath, "Dirty, damn A-rab," pronouncing the "A" with a long inflection. He comforted himself, nevertheless, by fingering the reassuring handle of the straight razor in his side pocket.

His thoughts reverted again to the pleasures of the evening, eventually spent in the North African port city of Oran. As he relived in his thoughts the twenty ecstatic minutes with the French girl of the Villa des Roses, he wondered if the other stewards in the galley of his ship had been as lucky as he. To his right, across and far below the low protecting stone wall that followed the descending road, twinkled the lights of the harbor, and he tried to pick out the position of his Victory ship, the *George S. Meredith*.

The muffled roar of an approaching vehicle interrupted his musings. He stepped to the side of the road to allow the car ample space to tear past him, but instead its brakes shrieked, and it drew to a halt a foot or two ahead of him.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

A gruff voice came from the darkness, and he looked up into the blinding beam of a flashlight. "Hey, you! C'mere!"

He stood uncertainly for a moment, and another voice, one patently presaging respect, said, "Hop out and get that man over here."

The glare of the flashlight still held him in its grip, but he was suddenly seized by the elbows and forcibly propelled to the side of the vehicle, an Army truck.

"What are you doing out this late at night?" asked the second voice.

Released from the blinding beam, the little Negro blinked his eyes, and made out that his captors wore the white letters "MP" on blue brassards.

"Ah's just going back to my ship, thass all. Just going back to my ship." He motioned vaguely in the direction of the harbor. "Just making my way peacefullike, back to my ship." He shook his head questioningly, in evident amazement that anyone should undertake to question his obvious presence on the road to port.

"Just going to your ship, huh? Well, son, don't you *know* there's a ten-o'clock curfew in this town? Goddammit, it's almost midnight. You'd better hop in the back and take a nice little ride with us."

"Nossuh," the Negro shook his head. "Ah reckon Ah'll just head on back to the ship. The mate'll be boiling mad if Ah don't show up for work tomor'r morning." He waved his hat in a friendly gesture, and turned to leave.

"Hey," said the first voice, "you deaf? In the back. Co-o-me on, now, in the back. Make it easy on yourself and climb in the back."

"Listen," said the Negro patiently, as though he were explaining some involved problem to a group of children, "Ah ain't no soldiah, and Ah ain't even no sailah. Ah's jus' a merchant marine, yassah, jus' a merchant marine, thass what Ah is, and Ah's going about my business of gittin' back to my ship. Ain't nobody telling me what to do, nossuh."

"Do you know what these are?" The second voice was sharper

CURFEW

than before. The flashlight blinked on again, focused on the uniform of the speaker, revealing the insignia of a full colonel. The speaker pointed to the insignia, and repeated his question.

The Negro thrust his head forward, bringing wide eyes within inches of the colonel's shoulder. "My, my," he chuckled, "ain't that a pretty looking little chicken?" He threw his head back in high-pitched raucous laughter. "She is a pretty-looking little chicken."

He was lifted abruptly off his feet, and sprawled full-length on the floor of the truck. Before he could make a move to rise, the truck lurched forward and tore full speed down the deserted road.

The Negro rose unsteadily to his feet, braced himself with one hand on the side panel of the truck, and proceeded to brush the grime of the floor from his blue pin-stripe suit. He retrieved his hat, and jammed it down on his head. His good humor of moments ago had vanished; he compressed his lips in anger. One of the MP's sat near the tailboard of the truck, nightstick in hand, and the little Negro knew it would be futile to try jumping from the vehicle, even if he dared to risk injury at this high speed. He spread a handkerchief on the seat, and carefully sat his trim figure on the white square of cloth.

II

"What's your name?" The MP sergeant behind the desk smiled involuntarily as he booked the small merchant marine. The sharp cut of the blue pin-stripe, the pointed suede shoes, and the pearl-grey fedora made an incongruous spectacle amid the dull monotony of olive-drab in the MP station.

"George Frazier."

"What outfit?" A clerk beside the sergeant wrote methodically in the book.

"Huh?" The Negro looked up, amused. He did not intend to answer any questions unless they clearly applied to him.

"You off a boat then? Well, what's the name of your boat?"

AMERICAN VANGUARD

George supplied the answer, and perceiving that he was the center of attention, began to enjoy himself again. He answered more questions.

At length the sergeant was finished. George's valuables had been taken from him, including his razor and his necktie and belt.

The sergeant leaned back in his chair; this prisoner was a welcome and humorous diversion in the evening's work. He winked broadly at the clerk in the adjoining chair. "*Mister Frazier*," he began, laying special stress upon the "Mister," "do you know why you're here?"

"Nossuh, nossuh, Ah don't." George glanced around. In addition to the sergeant and the clerk, several other MP's, on hand for emergency duty, crowded the small dimly lit room.

They were all watching him. George's white teeth flashed in a broad grin. He launched into the story of his arrest, ending with his retort to the colonel, when he had said, "My, my, ain't that a pretty-looking little chicken."

Loud guffaws rang through the room. The sergeant, pleased with his own foresight in extending the questioning of the prisoner, now decided to cap this minor travesty on the accustomed sanctity of the station house. He walked from behind the desk and placed his arm around George Frazier's shoulders.

"You're okay, man. Yeah, you really told off the provost marshal. You're a-a-all right." He beamed at George magnanimously.

"Of course, you *know* you have to be our guest overnight," he continued, "but we're going to furnish you with some real comfortable accommodations. Hey, corporal, show *Mister Frazier* to his suite."

A burly, red-faced MP rose from his seat along the wall, ground a cigarette under heel, and led George across the room. He pulled open a mottled-green door, and gestured George to enter. The little Negro hesitated on the threshold. A sour, sickly odor assailed his nostrils. He saw steps leading down into blackness, but could not discern what awaited him below.

"In y'go," barked the corporal. He had moved behind George and

CURFEW

shoved him unceremoniously through the door, which he closed and bolted behind him.

III

George could see nothing in the darkness. He half stumbled, half fell down the steps. At the bottom, he tripped over a body, and as he tried to regain his balance, a heavy boot lashed out and struck him in the shin, toppling him on to other sleeping forms. Several voices, thick with drink and sleep, cursed immoderately. George found his feet, collided with a wall, and stood now, trembling violently.

The smell of cheap liquor hung heavy in this dank pit, but it in turn was almost lost in the stench of vomit and urine and sweating bodies. George fought back a wave of nausea. Then he could no longer control himself, and he moved to a corner of the room, where he bent low for agonizing moments. Still retching, he sought an unoccupied spot on the floor.

But the slimy dampness of the floor repelled him. He experienced a brief spell of terror, and suddenly began to shake, not with illness, but with revulsion. The door at the head of the steps opened fleetingly, throwing light into the cavernous chamber, and George looked about—the room was a large one, and its present occupants must have numbered well over a hundred, all soldiers in various stages of inebriation or sleep.

Then the idea occurred to George.

The new arrival clattered down the steps, creating a momentary flurry of confusion; silence settled again over the room, broken only by snoring and groans from the prisoners.

George, on hands and knees, carefully probed his way across the room, and took up a watchful position at the foot of the steps. Perhaps an hour passed, perhaps two—George, ill and weary, could not keep track of the time—before the door again opened. George clambered up the stairs and through the door into the upstairs room. He looked wildly about, seeking the entrance. Then he nearly

AMERICAN VANGUARD

crumpled to the floor—one of the MP's had whipped him across the flanks with a nightstick. Other hands seized him roughly and pushed him toward the mottled-green door again. George fought savagely, squirming madly, but he was overpowered and the door came ever nearer.

As they forced him through the door, George Frazier reached out and seized the door jamb. The muscles of his arm and hand contracted in a frenzied grip. The burly MP corporal went to work, grimly, silently, on George Frazier's hand. He bent the thumb back, back. George Frazier, the neat little good-natured colored boy who had inspired laughter in the gloomy station house earlier in the night, no longer felt pain. He was blind now with rage and terror. With a sharp crack, the knuckle in his thumb gave way.

But still he retained his grip. He could not have let go now if he had willed it, and he no longer knew what he did. The big MP stepped back, shaking his head in perplexity.

The sergeant thrust him aside. "Goddam you," he cried, his voice tinged with despair, "get back down them stairs." He paused a moment; then the despair in his voice gave way to the anger of defied authority. "You black bastard, I'll make you let go."

The sergeant pulled the nightstick from an MP's grasp. Four times it descended, hitting a different knuckle of George Frazier's hand with each blow. George fell away from the door, his hand stretched before him, saliva bubbling from a corner of his mouth. The hand resembled nothing more than a bloody sodden pulp. "Shoot him up to the hospital," ordered the sergeant quietly.

IV

Thrusting pains raced the length of George's arm. His terror had vanished, and he was conscious only of an agonizing throbbing which was not centered on any one spot where he might concentrate on it. His hand, his arm, and his shoulder seemed equally aflame.

"Here, puff on a cigarette," said a soldier. "I've sent for the doctor—he'll be here soon to fix you up."

CURFEW

Long minutes passed. The soldier rustled a newspaper. George lay on his back on an army cot. He moved slightly, trying to ease his position, but the movement caused him fresh anguish, and he held himself rigidly. He shut his eyes against the pain, but opened them hurriedly. It was easier with his eyes open, diffusing the pain.

He heard an outer door open; then an officer, wearing a medical insignia, entered the room. "Busted knuckles," said the soldier. The officer rubbed sleep from his eyes, and glanced briefly at George's hand. He moved to a sink in the corner, to wash his hands.

"Fool niggers," George heard him mutter to the soldier, "always getting themselves into trouble."

Words of protest formed on George Frazier's tongue, but another wave of pain coursed the length of his arm, and he lay silently, waiting for the doctor to help him.

The Search

A SHORT STORY BY THOMAS A. DARDIS

I HEARD the door creaking as it opened. I could see the girl standing there in the hallway, framed against the light in the hall. She was making some kind of noise. I don't know German, but I could tell she was calling someone's name. I reached out and snapped on the light over my bed. The glare blinded me for a minute, and I lay there, blinking up at her. She was still standing there in the doorway, peering in at me. She seemed to be looking at something just behind me. "Well, sister, what is it?" I said, raising myself up on my elbows. She didn't say a word. She took another step inside the room and started to look around. I just lay there, looking up at her. I was sharing the room with three other guys, but they went right on sleeping. She gave the three beds the once-over. Whatever she was looking for, she didn't find it, for she started to make that sound again. Sounded like Gretchen, but I couldn't be sure.

By this time I didn't know what to think. Our adjutant, Lieutenant Gardner, had been sleeping on a cot down in the C.Q.'s office ever since we hit Bremen. Just to make sure we enlisted men didn't raise hell over here. The Colonel was a pretty good joe and kept his eyes closed most of the time, just so long as we kept women out of the billets. Couple of days ago they shipped the Lieutenant down to Rheims to pick up a load of champagne for the officers' liquor ration. For most of the guys that meant open house. For the last three or four nights I had heard dames running around all over the house. Mostly though, it was these young kids who couldn't make a real connection. They pick up these clapped-up babes down by the Red Cross. But that's all right with me. Let them fool around with it all they please, just so long as they keep it fairly quiet.

THE SEARCH

I figure all these German babes are a bit screwy one way or another, but this one had me stumped. She still hadn't answered me, so I let out with a "Fraulein!" at her. She stopped moving and stared at me. She was a cute kid. About eighteen or so, with a good build. She took a step towards me and stopped.

"Please—you help me find my sister?" She spoke pretty good English.

"Your sister?" I asked, staring up at her. "Where is she?"

"Please, my sister came into your house with another American soldier. I cannot find her."

"Let me get it straight, Fraulein. Your sister came in here with some soldier, right?"

"Yes, yes, we both came in with American soldiers. But now I cannot find my sister."

"Where's the guy you came in with?" She looked aside for a minute when I asked that. But she looked right back again and went on talking.

"He is . . . he is kaputt—he was drinking. He is asleep downstairs." She began to talk faster now, rubbing her hands together as she spoke. "Please—you must help me find Gretchen. She is sick, she is very sick, she—" She stopped there, staring at me, her eyes big.

II

I got out of bed and slipped into my pants. She didn't bat an eye when I got out of bed. But what can you expect in a country like this? I took Hagerty's flashlight from the top of his foot-locker and started for the door. She hadn't taken her eyes from me the whole time I was getting ready. I snapped the light off, and we left the room. This was a funny business. I wondered where it was going to end. I snapped on the flashlight, and she started down the stairs ahead of me in the dark. About halfway down the first flight she turned back and started whispering something to me.

"Gretchen was with a tall American soldier—he was very tall—perhaps you know which one I mean?"

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"Fraulein, there're about thirty guys in this house that answer to that description. We'll have to go all the way through the house to find them." She didn't say anything after that until we reached the ground floor.

I looked at my watch. It was getting along towards four and most of the dames would have cleared out by now. At least I hoped they would have. This was going to be bad enough as it was. There was a little night light burning in the lower hallway. I snapped the flash-light off and looked at her. I could see she was really scared. I'm not a soft guy, but I know when someone needs a good word.

"Look, Fraulein. We'll find your sister for you. So take it easy. OK?" She nodded her head at me a couple of times.

"Yes, yes, thank you—but please—" She stopped there, and I could see she had been holding on to herself right along.

"OK then, we'll start on this floor and go through all the rooms. You're sure you don't remember which room she went into?" She shook her head. "OK then. Let's go," I said, starting down the hall.

I started opening doors and looking in. Nothing but sleeping GI's. Every time I switched on a light she would look over my shoulder into the room. We woke up a couple of guys, but I had the door closed before they were really awake. I had my hand on the knob of the last door when she stopped me. I looked at her, but she looked away in time.

I was real lucky, if you want to look at it that way. I suppose I could have gone on opening doors half the night. It was the last one on the second floor. The moment I opened the door I began to get the smell. I switched on the light, and she followed me into the room. She reached the bed just as I was pulling the blankets back. It was Pete Johnson. He was OK, but he'd have a head in the morning. He had taken the bottle to bed with him and had spilled most of it. But no girl. I looked towards the sister, but she had started for the bathroom. She was running by the time she reached the door. When I got there she was down on her knees, shaking the girl on

THE SEARCH

the floor. I got down beside her and looked at the girl. They were sisters all right. This one was a little younger, maybe seventeen. She looked pretty bad. I placed my hand on the older one's shoulder.

III

"Look. I'll go call a medic—a doctor, see?" She nodded. "Yes, yes. You will hurry please? Gretchen is sick. I think she—" She broke off there and I stood up. "OK. You stay here with her. I'll be right back."

I went on downstairs and picked up the phone. Collins, the C.Q., was sleeping on the couch by the window. It took me nearly five minutes to wake up Doc Smith at the Officers' Quarters, but I finally got him.

"Hello—Captain Foster? This is Sgt. Brown over at the E.M.'s quarters. Look, Captain, we've got a sick girl over here. How's chances of coming over?" He started to moan about the time, but I cut him off.

"Look, Captain, I think the girl's in a pretty bad way. I'd appreciate it if you could get over here. I'll send the night driver over for you. OK, sir?" When I gave him a bit more of the dope, he finally said yes, so I hung up. I woke up Collins and told him the story. He had a hell of a time getting it straight, but once he did he took off like a bat out of hell. I started upstairs again on the double. She had been sitting on the edge of the bathtub. She jumped up when she heard me coming. She must have been crying while I was gone. I could see the dried tears on her face.

"Doctor's coming right over. Everything's going to be all right," I said, trying to smile at her. But it didn't do much good. I took another look at the girl on the floor. I began to curse myself for not having lifted her up before this. She was white, and I couldn't see any breathing to speak of. But I'm no doctor. I went back into the bedroom and started to get Johnson off the bed. He was pretty

AMERICAN VANGUARD

heavy, and the smell was terrific. I placed him on the floor near the window. He didn't make a sound. I went back to the bathroom and picked up the girl. She was a lot lighter than she looked. I placed her on the bed and covered her up with Johnson's blanket. The older one smoothed out the blanket and sat down on the edge of the bed.

I could see she was pretty shaky by now, so I offered her a drink from Johnson's bottle. She shook her head.

"No thank you. I do not drink." I couldn't get this kid. She was polite as all hell, spoke good English, and she didn't drink. I couldn't figure her horsing around like this with these two-bit GI Romeos. She started to walk around the room, but I made her sit on the chair near the door. She kept looking over at the bed every second or so. I tried to keep her interested in what I was saying, but it wasn't any good. Just then I heard the jeep coming up the street fast. I started for the door, but she stopped me.

"Can he . . . Can he help her, do you think?" She was holding on to me with a grip like iron. She looked right at me and I tried another smile. I said "Sure" and started to loosen her hold on me. She was still looking at me that way. I took my hand away and started for the door again.

I went on down and met the Doc just coming in the front door. He looked pretty mad. He didn't say a word, just started up the stairs in the dark. Like maybe he could see in the dark. I snapped on the flash and followed him. About halfway up he stopped and looked down at me.

"Goddamn you enlisted men. Why can't you fellows stay out of trouble? Haven't you been warned by the Colonel to keep your women out of quarters? Haven't you . . . ?" I cut him off there, staring up at him.

"Listen, Captain. This isn't any of my business, see? This girl just happened to walk into my room looking for her sister. I never saw either of them before tonight." He looked at me for a second. He saw I meant it and shut up. We went on upstairs. The doc's a pretty good guy once he gets things straight.

THE SEARCH

IV

When we came in, the girl jumped up. The doc walked over to the bed and sat down. He opened his bag and started to work. The girl and I stood there, looking down at him. It was quiet in the room, except for Johnson's heavy breathing over by the window.

The doc worked on her for about ten minutes. Then he looked up at the sister. She hadn't taken her eyes from him since he came in. He took off his hearing thing-a-magig and put it back in his bag. Then he looked at me. I just stared back at him. He stood up and started for the door. I followed him out into the hall. He started to whisper to me.

"Heart. Just quit on her, like that." He snapped his fingers. "Could've been the liquor or the excitement or anything." He turned his coat collar up and looked at me. "Look. Tell her we'll take care of everything. I'll have some of the boys over at the hospital get over here and they'll take her away. Look. Find out her address and tell her she'll be notified for the services. OK, Brown?" I nodded at him. He started downstairs and then looked back. "And listen, Brown, I'm sorry for that blowup on the stairs." I nodded again. He started down then, and I went back into the room. She was still sitting there, staring at the bed.

When I gave her the dope, she took it all pretty well. She didn't say much, mostly nodding or shaking her head. When I'd finished, I just stood there, looking down at her. Then she got up and started walking towards the door. She stood still a minute at the head of the stairs before starting down. We walked down together. It was getting light now, and I didn't need the flashlight this time. We stopped in the hallway and I opened the door for her. It was going to be a nice morning. We stood there a minute, staring up at the sky. She looked at me and I said, "You don't have to worry—they'll take care of everything." I stopped then. It was getting damned hard to go on with it. She could see it, I guess, for she tried a smile and it was a pretty good try.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

“You have been very kind. I would like to thank you.” She put out her hand and we shook hands on the steps. It’s just about their best custom, I guess. “Listen, kid,” I said, “I never did get your name, did I?” She smiled again. It was a good smile, and I began to feel better.

“My name is Trudy. And again, thank you.” She turned to go then, and I stood there watching her go down the steps. When she reached the bottom, she turned back and waved. I watched her start up the street. She walked fast with her head lifted high. I kept watching her until she reached the corner. She hadn’t looked back again.

O'Hara's Creation

A SHORT STORY BY ROBERT CARTER

MORNING surprised Grant O'Hara in some of the most curious places in China. Often it was that chance, with clumsy good will, or the batlike impulses of his own motion, led him toward sleep at the spent edge of perfection, as when he had awakened one morning in the fine, bitter smell of undergrowth on the slope of a mountain; exploring with his hands, before he dared open his eyes, he touched an unexpected block of stone and descended the gritty cup of its surface with his fingertips, trying to read its cold meaning. But it eluded him, and forcing a slow, distressingly painful look, he discovered that he lay beside the oval lips of an old grotto, where within the dark pocket of stone a stream of water flexed quietly in a corner pool. Until his twenty-fifth year he had never seen a mountain, even a familiar one, and now he cautiously picked his way down the swell of a mountain so ancient it had been domesticated by grass, housebroken by temples and the slate roofs of a Buddhist monastery, a silent tea shop with a terrace thrust recklessly into space. At the foot of the slope he paused and looked back; he wanted to remember this place. Perhaps he could return some afternoon with paper and charcoal (he had them somewhere in his tent) to sketch it. The mountain suggested a god to him, in a way; he visualized it as a squatting idol, friendly, probably near-sighted from age and constant peering across the countryside, and he could try to preserve this hint of benevolence.

More than once the sun aroused him in a rice field between the village of Poseh and his hostel; he had crept along the corduroy ridges of earth until he had lost command of even his hands and knees, slid helplessly forward into a bewildering picket of green

shoots, and slept. Paddy-crawling, it was called. Why was it, wondered O'Hara, that he had never slipped down a bank into one of the brown irrigation channels that moved in calculated stripes across the fields, where he would have settled into the ooze, drowned in a foot of water without an outcry? How, as he yielded to darkness, was he able to turn his face toward daybreak? But it was ridiculous to ask these questions; living, or the reasons for living, no longer invited his questions. His curiosity was gone; his memory was driven after it. He had once painted small, perishable landscapes for the ladies of a vigorous Nebraska town; the landscapes were used for Christmas cards, sometimes for mantel decorations, and when he wrote verses for them, their sentimental value was doubled or trebled. He had stolen a part of his birthplace for every one of those miniatures, and dissipated his thefts on neat white cards, but he was finished with that kind of pilfering. After robbing his past of all its significance, he was not going to destroy another tangible moment. . . .

Then at times the impatient hum of voices slithered into that thick envelope of sleep, like a fat anonymous worm burrowing through dream cells into his consciousness. There were never many dreams, and he could only recall frightening pieces of them when he wanted to remember what it was that left him so cold, so covered with perspiration. The voices at first had a quality of slippery formlessness, taking shape slowly, growing into the rising, falling curvatures of Chinese speech: the *s*'s spat; the *n*'s struck on brass; vowels rushed along the scale from one to five and back again, from anger to sadness, with no beat of tenderness between them. First he would recognize his mistress' voice, feel her thumb and forefinger closing about a fleshy pleat of his thigh, digging and questioning; then her sister's complaint rising to the pitch of despair at the other side of the room; and finally he heard the pleasant whisper of the child who slept on a small cot between the two larger beds, the sister's child. It was a room almost filled with beds; O'Hara enjoyed the intelligence that if he wished, he could flip himself from one to the next of them to the door, like a frolicking seal, and be out of the

O'HARA'S CREATION

room without ever touching the floor. Once outside, he could go down the crumbling staircase into the courtyard, still buttoning his shirt with easy, unhurried movements of his fingers, pass through a cluttered alley into the early confusion of the street, the first bright colors of morning. And what colors they would be: not the bile shades of grain he had scattered on his prairie landscapes, or anti-septic blues, but colors that had earth in them instead of dust, vivid red excitement more than sunburn and ravaged barns. With all this to see, his head would be clear, the air fresh; he could go back to his hostel and work.

But the girl would say to him: "Why must you go? Stay here; you're so tired now."

So he would turn heavily over in bed and stay, though he knew she would not let him sleep until she was herself exhausted, until she had taken the last of his energy and given him all of her warmth. O'Hara was her vessel; he was like one of those property jars that magicians use, which can be filled to overflowing and still remain dry and empty.

Less frequently, but with the same certainty, he would remember, when his senses were fully alive and curious, that he'd been arrested at some hour of the night and thrust into a meager, filth-ridden cell—by the Chinese authorities if they'd chased him first, or by the M.P.'s if he'd been careless and prowled in more public corners of the village. These mornings he would spend waiting for Lieutenant Munn to come and vouch for his good faith, waiting with his nostrils moving in distaste, the coils of his body threatening to betray him. When the lieutenant missed his summons, or was late in answering them, O'Hara knew that he would be herded with a queue of other prisoners to a railway siding at the outskirts of Poseh and kept there, shifting stubborn bales from flatcars to platform, until the sun was a lazy giant covering his back, and he could no longer imagine his own arms. When Munn came for him, he had only to endure a good-humored lecture for punishment, and even this duty, in time, was forgotten. Only an expression disturbed him then: Munn's face, so like the smile of the last visitor at a sickbed—

AMERICAN VANGUARD

kind, fragile, so embarrassed, so quietly hopeless that O'Hara considered it the reflection of his own torment. Seeing it, just hearing Munn's voice in the sounds of footsteps on the cement of the corridor, and a key pressing the lock of his cell, O'Hara was almost overcome with fear, so that his first stride across the floor had the nightmare weight of an original step.

His days were unknown beginnings—in strange directions, closing at the end of the clock in an ultimate fact: darkness; a riddle; a black zero. . . .

II

"I wish I knew what to do with you," said Lieutenant Munn. "You can't be helped here; you can't be cured. There isn't enough patience and understanding in the whole medical corps to do it. I've tried to get you sent back to India—I made the suggestion more than once, but they do nothing about it."

"And how could they help me there?" asked O'Hara. "The medics are the same in Calcutta and Poseh, poor fellows; the cure is the same."

"You'd be drinking better liquor in India," said Munn. "And you might live longer. You'll poison yourself wherever you are, but the poison is more deadly here. And faster. How you can drink so much bad gin is more than I can understand."

"It doesn't take much any more," O'Hara told him. "It doesn't take much at all."

"Look, O'Hara," Munn continued quietly. "This is the second morning this week I've got you out of jail, the fourth time this month." He rested his hand on O'Hara's shoulder, compelling the man to face him. "You haven't been working. How long has it been since you've repaired a set?"

"So long," O'Hara said, "that I've forgotten how to look at a Hallicrafter. I was never much good at it, Lieutenant—I've never seemed to like radios. Too many tubes and dials, too many pieces that I can't fit into the right places. . . . They broke a lot of them

O'HARA'S CREATION

trying to teach me how to make them run again, but I couldn't learn. . . ."

"When the war is over," O'Hara went on, speaking with a sly bitterness, "I'll file for a disability pension. I'll claim alcoholism, chronic and acute, service-inflicted. I've been here much too long. . . ."

Munn interrupted him. "How long?" he asked.

"Twenty-six months. I've forgotten the days, and even God has forgotten the hours. Do you want my history, Lieutenant? It's quite simple. I was never sent where I wanted to go, and I've never done what I wanted to do. One day, for no good reason, they gave me stripes. The next day, for no better reason, they took them away again. My God, the reasons. I've got no reason to leave this place, none to stay. That's my story, Lieutenant." He shrugged. "But I'm not killing myself; I want to bury them all: generals, officers, sergeants. They'll all have such splendid wakes."

"And you?"

"Me? I will probably write a book. Do you know what happened the day before I left for induction? An old teacher of mine stopped me on the street and said: 'Grant, you're going off to war, and I know it will be a good thing; you can come back and write a book about it, and tell the truth.' That sweet old stupid devil. She could never read my book, but of course I would never write it. I'm an artist, not a writer. Do you believe me, Lieutenant?"

"Of course," said Munn. "Why shouldn't I believe you?"

"Because I'm pulling your leg," said O'Hara. "I'm not really an artist, either." He smiled appealingly. "I'm a poseur. I think probably a man becomes a writer because he has stories to tell, and there is no one with the patience to listen to them, so he has to write them down. Or he paints because he sees strange things that belong only to him." O'Hara examined his hands; there seemed to be a promise in them. "I really believe that I drink," he said, "because I think it's better than pitying myself."

"I want you to come with me," said Munn. "I'm going to show you something."

III

They crossed the hostel grounds slowly, O'Hara struggling with the heavy, reluctant steps, the round audible respirations of an aging bear. Until they reached the hard, seamed field between the rows of barracks and the theater, Munn had to stop and wait several times for O'Hara to overtake him, that he might set out once more at his own swinging pace. At the theater Munn stopped again. O'Hara was shaken with fatigue, but he walked by then with greater ease.

Munn grasped him by the arm and propelled him gently into the building. He drew the sole of his shoe methodically across the crisp edge of a wooden bench, dislodging a long flake of mud, satisfying himself, with a powerful blow of his foot, that the bench was sound. Then he probed the boards of the floor in the same vigorous way.

"Mud walls," he remarked contemptuously. "But I managed to get plaster for them. It's not quite dry, but it will do. And the benches will hold up as long as we'll need them here. It's not a bad job at all." He did not look at O'Hara while he spoke, but around the room: at the benches and chairs, clustered at the entrance of the theater, the white enamel square of the screen, and finally at those discolored patches on the walls where the plaster was still wet, where the sunlight was muffled and reshaped on the surface into ugly grey striations.

"It will be better than showing our movies outside, at any rate," he added. "And it was a long time building. But it needs something else,"—here he turned thoughtfully to O'Hara—"and I want you to tell me what it is."

O'Hara repeated Munn's eager inspection. He sniffed at the sluggish eddies of air and dust and the odors of lime and unfinished wood; he touched the screen cautiously with one finger, boxed the compass of the room with his eyes, shook his head, and came back from his explorations, finally, to the walls. In them he found the answer to that puzzle of hollowness which annoyed them both in the room.

O'HARA'S CREATION

"It needs painting," he said.

"Yes?"

"But not just ordinary house paint," insisted O'Hara, warming to his discovery. "There should be some kind of mural on the wall: figures and colors. You could paint it all white or grey or green, but it wouldn't serve any use; the place would still be somehow bare. No—it wants much more than that."

"I think you're right, O'Hara," Munn said. "The walls ought to have some kind of life on them—of course you're right. They'll have to be painted." He opened his hands and spread them in a helpless gesture. "But I can't do it. I could get the place built; I did the plastering alone, but I can't draw any sort of line: straight or crooked. Who could do it?"

O'Hara picked up a slender shaving of wood from the floor and with it jabbed one corner of the wall. When he increased the pressure of his fingers, the moving sliver traced a hesitant spiral and left the faint impression of a pliant groove on the plaster. In the recesses of his knuckles the wooden tendril crackled, snapped at last, and left a few crushed shreds in the mold of his hand, a swelling bubble of blood.

"I can try to do it," he said. "You can't trust me; I may be careless and make a poor job of it, but I'll get it done—"

"Then you can have the job."

"—I don't know what I'll paint, now; I know only enough about painting to begin. You can't trust me, remember. In the mornings you'll probably still have to get me out of jail."

"I've done that before, many times. I'll remember where to find you."

"Wait," O'Hara suddenly said. "They've been after you, haven't they? They've been after me all along, of course, but they're probably trying to reach you now, through me. If you don't find something for me to do—if you don't keep me out of trouble, they'll make it hard for you. Isn't that it? Isn't that why you've got to find something harmless for me? Busywork!" he said savagely. "This is nothing but busywork. I can't do a man's work, so you're giving me

AMERICAN VANGUARD

this instead. Well, God damn every one of them—God damn them, I won't do it."

"Listen to me, now," said Munn softly. "Why should they want to get me? Am I so insecure that they have to reach me through some drunken enlisted man? I want you to do this work, but you were the one that suggested it. Building the theater was my idea; the mural is yours, and you'll have to go through with it. No one is after you, O'Hara—believe that. They've forgotten you. They don't give a damn about you."

"And why do *you* bother with me? Why do *you* care what I do?"

He had released another riddle—set free another fluttering question, a butterfly from his store of captives; they seemed to watch it gliding about the room, disturbed by its escape, uncertain how to reach and crush it in flight, or how to lure it back to its box. At once there was a dizzy, deceptive formation of them; they were busy multiplying in O'Hara's mind. Which of the swarm of puzzles was Munn, which the girl in the village? Which were the helpless moths of chance?

The butterfly disappeared; the answer was in its disappearance. . . .

O'Hara said nothing when Munn vanished into the projection booth at the rear of the theater and returned with a bundle of brushes, cans of paint, a tube or two of Chinese oils, and a handful of charcoal pencils, but he took them from Munn's hands, brought them all carefully to a bench near the wall, and placed them there with uneasy care. When he was prepared to begin, he lifted one of the pencils and tested its point with a short moist stroke of his palm. By the time he had addressed the wall, Munn was gone, and he was alone in the yellow heat of the theater.

IV

The zebras were the first to grow, in June. There were three of them: one rampant in the center of each wall; there would have been a fourth had not the remaining wall been interrupted by a

O'HARA'S CREATION

door. They were remarkable creatures, rearing back on long wiry legs, brushing their tails furiously across the grain of the walls, with the plump, impossibly brilliant coats of circus animals, and the shy ears, the shrunken volutes of the Asiatic ponies who wrestled with heavy carts in the streets of the village, tormented eyes, and the signatures of knouts on their puckered foreheads. They were not done, to the last flourishing stripe, until the first weeks in July, for they came slowly, in the mornings, in a fleeting succession of clear, hiatus hours.

When they were finished, O'Hara changed the plan he'd conceived. At first he had pictured a whole bedlam of animals: a fox in pursuit of a breathless hare, a dying leopard, a tiger dozing above the door; but the thought of a whole room full of them began to trouble him. It was too like a hangover on the Ark, this jumbled, neurotic zoo. The zebras must stay, because he liked their spirited poses, but he decided to fill the rest of his walls with the portraits of heroes, the likenesses of comic-strip gods and goddesses. He saw an American Olympiad, a sparkling tableau of myths, whose women would be inhumanly curved; the men would have the elegance of kings, and phallic postures, every one. . . .

Munn assured him that they were his walls, in every respect. "You don't even have to be decent. You can paint your women in or out of dress; you can go as far as the ceilings—cover them if you like."

"Then I think I'll paint you on the walls, somewhere."

"But you'll paint yourself first," said Munn, smiling. "And you will finish it."

Somehow, in the mornings, O'Hara knew, he would finish his work. He could not paint without help; he needed that help beside him, near the brushes, where he could reach it quickly; and by early afternoon the brush, trembling, freckling the plaster with a careless spray of paint, would warn him that he would soon be drugged and impotent. Then he must stop, with the blue pellet of an eye still on the tip of his brush, the lobe of an ear still waiting to receive a human shadow, thrust his brushes and jars aside, and grope his way out of the theater.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

And his awakenings were still obscured by odd currents of memory: recurrent images of the cell; the room of so many beds; voices; a key turning in a lock with a punctual *crack*—each image like the gloss of a spinning stone in a stream, the fall of a white glow into bottom sands. . . .

V

O'Hara had often doubted that he would ever complete the murals; out of weakness, perhaps, or boredom, which he feared much more than the waste of his strength, he might give even the few hours he spent painting over to his compulsive adventures. Munn was never there to prod or advise, only to furnish the materials he needed, to listen to O'Hara's excited plans and later to the even more excited changes in those plans. O'Hara worked quite without supervision.

What drove him at first was the naked, mocking face of the wall itself; later in the summer, when he heard (or overheard) comment about the murals, he began to consider the men of the hostel; he wanted to please them, to listen to their suggestions—for the mutation of a lip on this, or the more obvious and pleasing revision of a breast on that one of his ruddy heroines. It was not until late in August that he painted out of an obsession as powerful as the one that owned his afternoons. He was afraid that he might not have time to finish. A war full of ironies for O'Hara had saved two of its stock for the very last: when the news was released he was physically incapable of celebrating it; he could not keep a thing on his stomach; and this was the second irony: he worked harder, more desperately now that the men had begun to leave, and the reasons for work to disappear, than he had ever worked before. The hostel was emptying more swiftly with every flight, every day; the theater was only half-filled at night, and there were broken, useless cots in the barracks, depressing hollows gathered on the drum-taut tents. And O'Hara stole other, jealous hours to spend on his painting; he had to finish it. For he could feel the pressure of the city tightening

O'HARA'S CREATION

around the hostel. An American left; a Chinese seemed to appear in his path, like a scavenger hawk circling the sun. O'Hara knew that the villagers were waiting for the last of them to leave, so they might pounce on their Occidental remains. They were welcome to every piece of it, of course; every building but one—and every wall but four, his walls. These he could not let them have.

When his time had almost run out, and Munn told him there would be no more of it, no work left for him to do, no theater or murals, O'Hara stubbornly shook his head.

"I can't let them have it," he said. "You don't understand how I feel about the place."

"I do understand," said Munn. "After all, part of the place does belong to me; I built it. But the orders are clear enough. We're leaving Poseh, and the Chinese will move in as soon as we've gone. How long did you think you could go on like this?"

"They'll ruin my wall," O'Hara insisted.

"You won't be here to see them do it."

"—And they aren't finished yet; I still have another corner left to do."

"But you're going on with us, O'Hara," sighed Munn. "There's no other choice. I'm sorry about it—so sorry, O'Hara."

"I wish I could tell you—," O'Hara began, "that I know why you've done this. You've kept me at it without ever saying a word of any kind. You don't like what I've done to the walls, and I know it's bad enough, but as long as you were here, I couldn't stop. You tried to show me something you wanted me to see, put myself on those walls, in a way. But they're so much larger than I am that there's no sign of me in any part of them—just a bunch of funny-paper characters and a few zebras. If I were the greatest artist living," he went on, "I could only have painted what I did. It was too late for me to begin, you see. So you've wasted your time, Lieutenant—and your paints. I couldn't be cured." He struck Munn's desk with his knuckles. "No one can help me," he repeated.

Munn said: "I really couldn't expect to cure you, however I tried, but I still wanted to do it. Do you mind, O'Hara?"

"Mind?"

"What you say I've tried to show you. What you've done to those walls. I haven't tried to show you anything at all; I've only wanted you to work."

"Therapy?"

"Perhaps," said Munn.

"Well, I have one thing left to do," murmured O'Hara, "while those murals are still mine. . . ."

It would be easy to destroy it all, now and quickly. In an hour he could be sure that his murals would never be seen and badly used by strangers. There was calcimine enough in the back of the theater to cover every clot of paint on the walls; he need only pry open a can and wet his brush. The metal lid spun out of his fingers and vibrated on the floor; O'Hara attacked the first iridescent figure he could reach, made one brutal beginning with the brush, and stopped. He saw again what he had done, and it shocked him; all those monstrous, coy obscenities on the walls—he had copied imitations twice-removed—left a smear of animation here, a feathery illusion of honesty where his hand had once faltered and he'd turned a leer into an impulsive smile, or a cheek, heavy with oils, into the suggestion of human flesh. If he had ever seen beauty anywhere, in a perfect gathering of sky, land, and body, the secret pattern, he had forgotten it in this room. It had been lost between his hand and the wall.

White *gouttes* of paint slid from the thick ridges of his brush, bursting unobserved on the wooden boards at his feet. The other colors were still open and waiting on the bench; they made restless, swirling movements when he stirred them.

VI

O'Hara was gone from the hostel the following morning, but there was a difference in this disappearance from all the others. His possessions were also gone from his tent, and the few he had left behind were scattered on the ground in the deliberate way of a man

O'HARA'S CREATION

who wants to indicate that he is not coming back to put them in order again. Munn knew that he had left before the others learned of it; he'd found O'Hara's note propped on his desk.

"I'll be happier here," O'Hara had written. "These people expect very little of me, and I'll get along with them. I have a woman here who thinks I'm beautiful; you can't expect much more than that. But I wanted to thank you. . . ."

There was a postscript. *"If you think you'll get into any trouble because of this, you know the girl in the village who can tell you where to find me."*

So it was not necessary for Munn to shake O'Hara awake that morning, or drive into the city to rouse him out of jail.

Instead, Munn stood inside the theater for a few moments and looked at O'Hara's murals. There had been changes in the night, angry changes, he could see; in some places the walls were scowling with ruthless swaths of red; in others the alterations had been made with practiced devotion. There were faces now that puzzled Munn: as where a harsh line had been drawn that pulled the corner of a vacant face into an obvious twist of smugness; or where the legs of a swollen, muscular figure had been reduced to the width of a pair of buckling straws; and on another wall the face that Munn remembered as a fatuous and possessive glare of light ochre and white had become a radiant woman, electrically poised, alert. In every face, in many of the bodies, O'Hara had opened some hideous flaw: a crevice, a stain of blood, or the almost hidden extrusion of a blade of bone. Munn shuddered as he followed the gallery on the walls.

He saw every expression he could imagine but one, nor did he know what this omission was until he had left the theater; he had to return again to be sure. There was nowhere a look of what he could say was compassion.

There was one, in the furthest gloomy corner, that seemed to be what he wanted to find. But he saw in a different play of light from the open door that he was wrong. It might have been his imagination; it could be something O'Hara had started to paint and had

AMERICAN VANGUARD

not trusted himself to finish, possibly the last face he had done, one he intended to return and complete some later, private night.

It was a face Munn could not recognize, however he circled the room with his inquisitive, proximal squints; for the features dissolved when he tried to take them by memory and bottle them snugly with all the others. They were fetal clichés, those features, or plastic symbols: throat, jaw, one stricken, winking eye; and the mouth was splitting from within, like a berry about to break out laughing. But whose face was it?

“O’Hara?”

He found no answer, anywhere. O’Hara’s face it could be, O’Hara’s creation—or it could be his own face, a hundred faces, changing, growing into one, or anyone at all.

A Moment in Trieste

A SKETCH BY WILLIAM C. STYRON, JR.

"THIS was worth the trip," Doc said.

"Yes," Nick said. "This is the life." And he looked at the girl he was with—she was a large cheerful girl named Maria—and he squeezed her plump hand happily, gazing up at the sky.

There were four of them sitting in the twilight on the *terrazza* behind the wine shop, where they had come that evening after wandering all over Trieste searching for an open-air place with a garden and a view. After their third bottle of chianti that afternoon in a damp and rancid saloon in the center of town, where the wine tasted like alum and the sunlight, sifting in through barred cellar windows, perished as quickly as it fell, Doc had declared loudly that the air of Italy could only be savored properly at twilight, in a garden, and that it was criminal to waste time in a Capuchin tomb. So they had stumbled up into the violent sunlight and had spent an hour walking aimlessly down the swarming and dusty summer streets, past the shop windows with their hopeful displays of costly, unsalable bric-a-brac, and the deserted restaurants where yawning waiters flicked mechanically at the tablecloths. Then Nina said she remembered a place on the edge of town, near the Yugoslav border, where there was a view and—if the place was the same as before the war—the best wine to be had anywhere.

And they had ridden on the ancient neglected trolley for miles, it had seemed, across the tired city, around the blue rim of the harbor where in the glitter of the afternoon sun they could see the ship that Doc and Nick had come over on, riding high at anchor, the cattle all unloaded now, and beyond the ship the low bristling

outlines of the English destroyers, leashed and straining at their moorings. Then the trolley dipped rattling past the gutted docks with their bright ruin of concrete and steel lying tangled and gleaming under the Adriatic sun, and finally out beyond sight of the harbor itself, where they could see only the row of crumbling warehouses on a bare acre of clay, among which scavenger children darted like sandpipers.

Finally the trolley labored up a steep hill for more than a mile, and the sultry air and dust seeped into the car and the heat was thick and stifling and full of the sour vegetable smell of Italian streets. The city, both in external design and in atmosphere, was changed now, for the houses and buildings which in the older part of town were a neat and happy mixture of Latin and gingerbread Austrian became here dingy and bleakly austere. At the same time the whole air of the section—in contrast to the war-weary but affecting sense of laughter and diversion along the Via Paduina and the Piazza Garibaldi—seemed lugubriously Slavic. Most of the windows were boarded up along the route, and the houses which in the other section of town all had been graced with flowers or greenery—if only a few bright red *garofani* in the window boxes—were here weather-beaten, grey, and rather menacing. On the brow of the hill near the border they could see trios of armed British soldiers on patrol, and on some of the stone walls of the houses were painted legends such as TITO and VIVA TITO and glaring crimson words in Serbian that none of them except Maria, who was born in Fiume, could understand.

"The Soviet will triumph," she translated, and Nina wrinkled her lovely face in scorn, and repeated the phrase in Italian, and muttered: "*Titò! Cane bisunto!*"

Then Doc, who had drunk too much chianti, and half a bottle of cognac besides, was sick out of the window and Nina, giggling, held his head while the people in the car stared and mumbled to each other and laughed.

A MOMENT IN TRIESTE

II

Later, however, as they sat on the *terrazza* in the cool air of twilight and watched the sun fade behind the mountains over Yugoslavia and saw the grey barren faces of the hills grow dusky with the coming of night, they all felt better and even Doc ordered another bottle of wine. Below them the hill upon which the terrace was situated swept down into a rocky valley and through the valley snaked a water-filled gorge. On the heights above the gorge there was a single narrow-gauge railroad track which wound out of the city past the wrecked piles of masonry which had once been tanneries and rendering plants, and then disappeared, miles away beyond the sparse vineyards of the foothills, into the mountains.

They watched and drank alone for a while, since there were few people besides themselves on the terrace. The men who composed the dance band had just arrived and walked about perfunctorily, setting up their music and tuning their instruments.

"Maria," Nick said. "I love you, *bella mia, bella donna, fortissimo.*"

"Ah," Maria cried, her big breasts heaving, as she placed one arm on Nick's shoulder and laughed. "I love you too. But you are drunk already."

"No, Maria," Nick said. "Not drunk, just happy. Americans don't get drunk."

"Yes," Maria said. "That is what I hear always, but you lie."

"That is right, Maria," Doc said. "Tell him so. He is the biggest sot in the world."

"Sot?"

"Yes. Sot. You know." Doc lolled his head forward and goggled his eyes in a pantomime of drunkenness and Nina's dark eyes glowed and she raised her glass triumphantly and laughed. "*Umbriago!* Yes? Sot is *umbriago.*"

Then Doc called the waiter, who brought them a silver platter covered with thin slices of bologna and salami and warm strips of brown-crustured fragrant bread, dark ripe olives as big as plums, and

AMERICAN VANGUARD

more wine, and they sat and talked in buoyant broken English as they watched the wavering last light fade behind the mountains.

III

The terrace was becoming dark and the pavilion and the tables at its edge were beginning to fill up with customers. The people who came in were for the most part wide-faced Slavs who sat down inertly at the tables and ordered "*vino!*" in heavy voices. A few feet away two men with their girls took a table. The men were in shirt sleeves and wore red suspenders and the girls, both of whom were very young, chattered with childish poutings and plucked at the sleeves of their men, who smiled briefly and returned to their wine with darkly stolid faces.

Now the lights were turned on all around the terrace, illuminating the swarthy faces of the men seated near them and sending down unshaded beams of light on the dance floor and on the ubiquitous faded terra-cotta frieze above Nick's head of Dante lurking at the Ponte Vecchio. Doc was teaching Nina a song and carefully in the shadows beneath the table Nick stroked Maria's fleshy knee.

"Maria," he said loudly, "come with me to America."

Maria closed her eyes and gently nodded her head to the first bars of the music. The band—a five-piece affair—was playing "Honeysuckle Rose" very loudly and in mincing ragtime, and the people at the other tables began to dance while Nick, whispering half-hearted words of tenderness to Maria, stared through a translucent winery haze at the people on the floor, at the blunt surly men and at the fatuous lovely faces of the girls, and thought that this was indeed the life.

The two couples at the next table were not dancing, and Maria pulled Nick by the hand toward the dance floor, and he, lurching cheerfully through the crowd, looked back at the two tables and saw, at one, Doc smiling, whispering intently into Nina's ear and, at the other, the two men staring with sullen resentment at Doc's

A MOMENT IN TRIESTE

back and then into his own abruptly startled eyes, the two childlike girls prattling and frowning petulantly at the men, and saw one of the men—a tall, scornful fellow with grim lips and a muscular neck—suddenly lean back and give a wild bellow of a laugh and grasp his girl roughly by the wrist and half-stagger onto the floor.

Above the shuffle and slap of the dance and the dissonant music Nick could hear Maria's voice saying "Niccolo, you dance well," and for some reason incongruously at that moment he remembered that Joyce wrote *Ulysses* in Trieste, a thought which was lost amid the swirl of thick guttural voices and the feel of broad hips jostling his and the sudden glimpse of the man who had been at the table now dancing a yard or two away from him, his lips twisted in sarcastic contempt, his little button blue eyes staring at him full of outrage and scorn.

IV

Now the orchestra began to play "Begin the Beguine." The throng on the floor took up the amazing rhythm, which was no more Latin in its mood than a Norwegian folk tune, impelling the people into a shuffling travesty of a dance, their elbows wildly gyrating and their feet stomping the floor in lumpy precision. And Nick, maneuvering awkwardly with Maria, felt himself being forced gradually toward the broad heavy back of the man who had been staring at him, and, though unable to see his face, knew that the man's eyes wore the same look of cold fury and derision, and sensed somehow, without looking, that the other man at the table had now joined the dance.

Then Nick turned his head, hardly feeling Maria's plump arm around him, and saw Doc's lips moving gaily as he talked with Nina in the corner and heard Maria's voice once more, saying "Nicky, what is the matter?" and turned back again, seeing the sudden alarm in Maria's eyes as they both heard the two men's voices singing—high, harmonious, and derisive above the noise of the dance—a

AMERICAN VANGUARD

parody of "Begin the Beguine" in guttural and mucous syllables which ended with the contemptuous word: "*Americani!*" And Nick, listening to the words rising high and taunting over the music, suddenly felt the entire dance floor become tense and nervous with the contagion of the song and heard a restless tremor of excitement run through the crowd until, hemmed in with Maria between four couples and watching a few feet away the faces of the two men—their wide mouths agape, eyes insulting and cruel—he felt the electric flow of anger rising around him and the mounting turbulence of indignant voices, and finally the music stopped and an oppressive buzz hung over the room, and he saw the ridiculous arm of the bandleader hovering cataleptic over the murmuring crowd. Somewhere a glass shattered and the air was full of the thick odor of wine.

Then a curious thing happened. As Nick stood in the center of the floor, feeling the hostile pressure of the bodies against him, he heard a shrill woman's voice shout something unintelligible, and saw the crowd turn away from him and surge past and around him toward the edge of the *terrazza*.

Nick looked down at Maria who clutched his arm tightly and whispered, "*Fuoci di gioia,*" and then he gazed past the people gathered at the rim of the pavilion and saw, high in the starless dark above the valley, the flaming letters TITO burning on the mountain and two huge blazing red stars at either side. It was a black night and the outlines of the mountains were hidden and it seemed from the *terrazza* as if the symbols were flickering in mid-air.

"They put petrol on the ground and burn it," Maria said. "This is the first time in months."

"Let's get out of here," Nick said.

Doc and Nina had moved around from the crowd and stood closely together at one side of the pavilion. Doc was holding Nina tightly and her eyes were wide with fright.

"They are beasts, all of them," Maria said. "We should not have come here."

A MOMENT IN TRIESTE

"Let's go," Nick said. He motioned to Doc and the four of them edged out of the pavilion. Nick, passing through the door, looked back at the people intently watching the fires, and saw for an instant the frieze above the heads of the people, and Dante, stooped and pensive, regarding the faded impassive face of Beatrice with timeless despair.

V

BRING BACK THE DEAD

I Couldn't Cry

A SKETCH BY MARSHALL N. LEVIN

IT WAS ODD in a way my not being able to cry I had expected to perhaps I even had looked forward to crying I don't know just why I didn't maybe because it all happened so quietly and so quickly I was sitting on my bed and the door opened and Dad was standing there in the doorway and his face was pale and in the dim light it looked almost green

and his eyes were all puffed and red

he walked in on his tiptoes and I remember thinking that he looked as though someone was asleep and he didn't want to make any noise and his voice was soft and low and I could hardly hear him when he said your mother is dead that was all I was sitting on my bed and I looked at him and he looked at me and I nodded my head and I said yes as though I knew it all along but she'd been sick only three days and I didn't know till just then that she'd died and my father stood all alone in the middle of the floor just like a painting I thought and the words kept coming out of his throat even though his mouth was closed your mother is dead your mother is dead your mother is dead and then they'd stop and I'd look at my father all alone in the middle of the room and they'd start over again your mother is dead your mother is dead and a soft groan a deep breath of air left my father's chest as though someone had stuck a pin in a bladder and I thought maybe he caught it too

but my mother was dead and I knew it was true because my father had said so and he was standing there and somehow a blond hairpin had got caught in the buttonhole of his shirt

and there was something I wanted to say something I should have

AMERICAN VANGUARD

said but I couldn't think what it was and then I couldn't think of anything to say and I just sat there and my father was looking at me and I didn't cry at all I should have cried but I didn't and I thought maybe my father was waiting for me to cry and I tried to think of something sad and I imagined that I was standing in front of the house and all the big shiny automobiles were running past and little Bobbie ran after the ball that I threw too hard and suddenly the black tires screamed and little Bobbie fell down and all the men ran around and all the women cried out but little Bobbie didn't cry at all and after that little Bobbie went away and then I imagined that Mommy and Daddy were dressed all in black like the minister on Sunday and some men were putting a little white box in the ground and Mommy was shaking all over and Daddy had his arm around her and then I knew she was crying and that made me sad but I remembered that my mother was dead and she couldn't cry any more

she won't cry any more I said but my father stood all alone in the middle of the floor just like a painting and he didn't hear me he was talking but I couldn't hear what he was saying and the sleeves of his shirt were rolled up to his elbows and his arms were hairy and brown he was looking at the rug and I knew it was dirty because Mommy hadn't cleaned it this week like she did every other Friday his hair was all mussed like it was every morning when he and Mommy used to come in and say get up sleepy-head and I'd say Daddy's hair is all bent and Daddy'd say oh it is it is it and Mommy'd say yes it is so there and then she'd muss it some more and he'd muss her hair and they'd both laugh some more and then I'd laugh and jump up and down till Mommy'd say hey you're going to break the bed and Daddy'd reach down and pull me out of bed with his arms that were so brown and hairy and strong

Mommy won't cry any more I said

and my father looked at me with his eyes that were so red and puffy and he was talking to me now but I couldn't hear what he was saying but it was flowers

on Sundays we used to get in the car and Daddy would drive and

I COULDN'T CRY

I'd push my hand out the window till the wind pushed it back and we'd have to duck when we went under the yellow bridge that the other cars went over

—drive out past the Arboretum Bob

—okay hon but we'll be late for dinner

—Mother won't mind it's spring and you know what spring does

—I ought to wasn't it April when you finally turned the trick

—oh you it was May and you were pretty happy about it

—is that so if I wasn't driving you know what I'd do

—what makes you think I'd let you

—I guess I can kiss my wife if I want to

and when Daddy laughed a big deep noise came from his stomach and the whole seat jumped up and down and Mommy would laugh and laugh and I'd laugh and pretty soon we'd all be laughing so hard and we drove right past the flowers and didn't even look at them

Granny would be waiting for us at the door and she was so soft when she bent down to squeeze me I felt all funny inside because she was so soft and her hair was all grey like the blanket in little Bobbie's room that nobody used after little Bobbie went away and one time I said so and Mommy went out of the room and Daddy picked me up and put me on his shoulders and we played horsey-horsey and Granny always smelled like bread and cake and I was hungry

my father came over and sat down on the bed beside me and he put his hand on top of mine your mother has gone away he said but it wasn't his voice that said it

has she gone away like little Bobbie went away I asked him and he looked at me for a long time and then he said yes your mother has gone away like little Bobbie went away but it wasn't his voice that said it this time either and then I said now little Bobbie won't be alone any more and my father didn't say anything but he just sat on my bed beside me with his hand pressing down on top of mine and looking at the floor between his slippers

AMERICAN VANGUARD

—Tommy Tommy wake up sleepy-head don't make any noise now

—did Santa Claus come Mommy did Santa Claus come

—yes he came come on get up now and don't make any noise we're going to surprise your father

—what did Santa Claus bring me Mommy

—not now first we're going to surprise Daddy

was asleep and we didn't make any noise when we crept into the room and put the two boxes on top of Daddy's stomach but he grabbed our hands and laughed because he was awake all the time and he opened the small box and it was a pair of bedroom slippers but there was only one there and Daddy didn't know what to say till he opened the big box and there was the other slipper all alone and we all laughed and Santa Claus brought me a tricycle and a box of soldiers and some picture books

Daddy I said and my father looked at me and patted my hand and he said what and I didn't know what to say so I said over again now little Bobbie won't be alone any more and my father said yes that's right Tommy little Bobbie won't be alone from now on mother and little Bobbie will be together

and my father looked like he was going to cry but I didn't know why because I thought he should be happy that Mommy was going to see little Bobbie again are you glad they'll be together I asked him but he wasn't listening to me any more because he had his hands over his face and he was making funny noises down in his throat like the puppy used to make before he ran away and got lost

I knew my father was crying

my throat felt funny and I couldn't swallow because I was sad that my father was crying and he never cried before and I wanted to say something but I didn't know what to say so I put my hand on my father's arm and I just sat there and he was crying his hands over his face

and I tried and tried but I couldn't cry

Folded Hands

A SHORT STORY BY ANGELICA CARO

JULIAN would probably not be satisfied. First of all, because he did not like watches, secondly because he did not want Marc to be independent and steal without him. Moreover, Marc had been so careless in his sudden frenzy, that someone had noticed him as he precipitately made his way out of the throng. "Stop him!" a voice had screamed behind him. "Stop him!" It must have belonged to an extraordinarily mediocre person, no one more mediocre in all Naples, Marc thought, as he walked down the street with a studied air of nonchalance. He wished he could look like Julian, so relaxed and graceful that there was nothing else one could think of, but how happy it made you to see him walk. That was probably the reason why Marc had never properly learned the "criminal gait," as Julian called it: there was too much of Julian in it, to ever make it his.

Marc walked faster and felt again in his pocket. The watch was heavy, and his fingers touched a deep scratch on its back. That, too, was bad. He could not have known, of course, but Julian would laugh and call him contemptuous, childish names. Among all the humiliations Marc had to take from his friend, that soft, provocative laughter was the hardest to endure, because it sapped all the resistance in his shivering sixteen-year-old body. Once, only once, Julian had been angry with him, so angry that he had flung the glowing tip of his cigarette against Marc's hand. The burn, strangely enough, had not really hurt. It had been like Julian himself, and Marc dreaded the day when the faint red scar on his hand would have completely vanished.

II

In the uncertain light of the fading October day, Marc looked at his watch for the first time. It was a beautiful piece, heavy shining gold with that look of distinction that always made Julian's lips redden as if those long thin lips were the great point of attraction of his strongest emotions. Marc himself did not enjoy stealing; at least, he had not until twenty minutes ago, and then it was not the act of taking that had rushed him into blind intoxication, but rather the knowledge that he was independent of Julian, and could act all by himself whenever he pleased to. He would not go home immediately. He told himself that it was because he wanted to enjoy his freedom. But while he let himself be carried away farther and farther, his only thought was Julian. He saw him distinctly, pacing up and down in their shabby small room. It was so clear a vision that for a brief, vertiginous moment he was Julian himself. The smell of wet old wood and stale cabbage disappeared when he blew the smoke out of his round, shadowy nostrils. He would be anxious and irritated. He would look out for Marc, and the window sill would sigh lightly under the weight of his slender body. He would feel that in spite of his harshness and contempt, he liked Marc very much—very, very much. . . . He would not show it, tonight, when Marc came home. On the contrary he would pretend to be very angry, maybe even as angry as that one, single time a few weeks ago. . . .

Marc took his hand to his lips and sucked the faint red spot. There was a trembling in his body, and waves of hot blood came shooting through his heart. He felt weak; even the watch in his pocket seemed suddenly unbearably heavy. Something was wrong that evening. It had been so from the moment he had heard that flat, angry voice calling behind him, "Stop him!" It had made him feel cheap, as if he were just a common, despicable pickpocket. But he was not; he was not! It was his form of expression to please Julian—just as somebody else would write poems or put a drop of perfume behind the lobe of the ear. But that mediocre, stupid voice would have no

FOLDED HANDS

comprehension for that. "Stop him," he called. "Thief. . . . thief. . . ."

Marc started running. It was very bad to do that, so foolish, indeed, that a sense of imminent danger grasped him. But danger was good if it made you forget those awkward legs that would never learn to walk nonchalantly. A throbbing was beginning to hammer into his ears. He heard the dry clapping of his feet on the pavement, and the noise echoed in his head, like other running feet following him from far away. The hollow gasping of his breath sounded foreign, like a presence at his side. "Thief. . . . thief. . . ." the flabby man called after him. His vision got blurred, blackness approaching him like wings eagerly expanding. He extended his hands and pushed a door. . . .

III

The inside of the church was cool and padded with silence. An unreal, soothing light was pouring through the bluish windows and came towards him in a steady flow that seemed to have its source in an unearthly stream of peace and gladness. It was ridiculous to stand there, he thought, and he tried to laugh aloud as Julian would have done, but somehow, it was impossible. He stood at the door and looked forward until, almost unwillingly, he had grown quiet in the generous blue light. He did not remember ever having been in a church; yet it was strange and deeply familiar like every strong new impression. As he gazed at the blue window, he distinguished a vague design of figures looking down to him. It drew him forward, as if his hands had been seized. Alone in the church, he suddenly found his perceptions limited to the dark walls that held the quietness and the silence. There was no world. There was no Julian. He did not think of him; he just felt cut off, so abruptly and so entirely that it gave him the frightening feeling of just beginning to live. There was the pureness in him, the airy lightness of a transparent vase as it is blown by the glazier, still warm and almost trembling, before its form is definitely fixed. His fingers instinctively searched

AMERICAN VANGUARD

for the heavy golden watch with the scratch on its shining back, and he dropped it to the floor. It made a dry sound, as the glass touched the stones and cracked with a delicate singing. Then he stepped forward until he could distinguish the figure on the window.

A woman, her hair touching her shoulder, and the folds of her garment barely showing her feet, bent down her face to him with a smile that seemed to be there just that one, single moment. She held her hands folded together in a gesture she must have taken from him, because there was an aching inside him as if he had been torn open, and all his pain was streaming to those hands that rested into each other, like silence holding peace. He must be ridiculous looking, he thought again, as he joined his own hands, and then he forgot to think at all. Staring up into the woman's smiling face, he felt something inside him healing together. His hands had always been like that, he suddenly knew. It gave him a sense of appeasement, an inner smile which had been there before—he could not remember when. It must have been before he met Julian. And now he could suddenly return to Julian, and it did not frighten him.

"Make me free," he said ardently. "Make me free."

The smile still lingered on the woman's face, and she bent down to him, almost visibly. It was more real than anything that had ever been with Julian, even the burn of the cigarette, even the way the man's voice had called him a thief. There was a fervor in his folded hands that made him strong—so strong he would never steal again. "Never," he whispered.

He could leave now, but he did not yet want to. The moment the smile would fade away, he told himself. . . . As long as it was there, peace was coming down to him, and he held up his hands high—higher . . . as close to her as possible. . . .

IV

When the door suddenly creaked behind him, he turned around. For a moment he could distinguish nothing, his eyes still blinded by the blue light. Then suddenly a voice called: "Hold him," and he

FOLDED HANDS

saw a short arm pointed in his direction. "There he is, the thief; hold him, hold him."

Marc recognized the voice. Flat and mediocre. The voice that would never understand. For a second it paralyzed him; then he, too, screamed. It was a shriek of pain, of fear and the wild, frantic laughter at being thus betrayed.

"Yes," he yelled, "yes, hold me!"

He rushed down forward and picked up the broken watch. It almost seemed his folded hands had grown so weak he could not hold the golden jewel, but then his strength returned. At a bound he lifted his arm and hurled the watch against the window into the bent face that smiled and smiled. The blue glass fell to the ground in a clattering cascade. "Oh," the fat man uttered. Another black form came running forward. Marc wondered if on the broken pane of blue glass the smile would still linger on. It would; it would! Fists outstretched, he jumped forward, with the blind feeling of an iron ball rolling towards nothingness. . . .

There was a stabbing pain in his wrists as he suddenly felt breaking against a firm mass. He had the sensation of a thousand fragments of blue glass cutting through his flesh deeper, deeper, until they had penetrated into his head, and he felt himself sinking down along a smooth edge of blackness. "Julian will never see the watch," he thought, and he knew he would never again smell the odor of cabbage and wet wood. If the pain in his wrists would go on like that, he could not put his hands together any more. He would die then, or wouldn't he? He was still holding the thousand sharp fragments of blue glass in his cramped palms. Perhaps the smile of the madonna was on one of them, there against his bleeding skin. . . .

He had reached the bottom of the dissolving slope.

Fog

A SHORT STORY BY COSTA CAROUSSO

FOG was everywhere. There was no sea, there was no sky; there was only the ship rolling softly silently, silently softly on the slow, ponderous swelling and heaving.

"Jesus!" said Murphy. "I wish I knew where the hell we are!"

"What do you care where you are?" answered Smitty. "They'll get the engines fixed sometime. Meanwhile you're eating, aren't you?"

"Yeah, but I don't like this. Not knowing where you are, not seeing nothing. . . . After a while you get to thinking and thinking. . . ." He leaned over the rail and spat carefully. "You can hear it," he said. "You can hear it, all right, but you can't see it."

"It's there," said Smitty. "And even if it ain't there, so what?"

"You get to wondering. You get to wondering where you are, and you look out there, and there's nothing. Nothing except that goddam fog. Jesus, what I wouldn't give to be in port!"

"You're always wanting to be in port," said Smitty. "Ever since I've known you, you're always bitching about being in port. For chrissake, why don't you quit the sea? You don't belong on the seal!"

"It ain't that I want to quit. It ain't the sea. It's this goddam fog. I want to look at something. I want to smell something. I want to touch something, so's I'll know I'm alive."

"Jeez," said Smitty. "Ten days out, and already burning for a piece of tail!"

"It ain't that," Murphy objected. "It ain't just that."

"Touch something, smell something!" Smitty jeered. "After three days of smelling that, and your own puke, you'll be damn glad to ship out again."

FOG

"Yeah," Murphy acknowledged. "You get sick of it, all right. But you have to have it."

"I don't have to have nothing," Smitty answered angrily. "I can take it or leave it alone. That's why I'm not bitching all the time like you."

II

Murphy sighed. "But you ain't me." He cleared his throat and spat carefully over the rail. "The goddam fog's like soup," he said. "You can't even hear it no more."

"For chrissakes, shut up!" said Smitty. "It's there, ain't it?"

"Yeah, it's there, I guess. But are we here? The only thing I can see now, is me when I was four. I'm riding a scooter that was my sister's—you made it go by rocking on one leg and then the other—and I can smell the way the hot sun made the metal smell, and I can hear the way the thing squeaked, and how cold and scared I felt when suddenly the sun went behind a cloud. That's the only thing I can see, and I can see my sister, and that was thirty years ago, almost." He clutched the other man's arm.

"How come I can see that, and my sister? How come, when she's been dead for almost thirty years?"

"How should I know?" said Smitty. "And what difference does it make? I got no time to worry about things like that."

"But don't you wonder sometimes?" Murphy insisted. "Don't you wonder about all the places you've been? The guys you got drunk with, and the women you slept with? Don't you get the feeling sometimes that you left a little part of you there?"

"I got enough worrying whether I'll get the clap afterwards," said Smitty. "They can do their own worrying about what I left behind."

"It ain't that. It ain't only the women. It's trying to figure where you left the biggest part of you, because you know that all the little parts are lost. And then you get the feeling there are places where you left the big parts, but you can't remember. I remember a room

AMERICAN VANGUARD

where I used to live when I was about eight, and the sun used to shine kind of like gold through the shade and fall on the bed. And I remember I used to watch the dust floating through the sun and how it would get lost the minute it left the sun. I remember now that I was never happier in my life, and I don't know why."

"I guess everyone remembers those things sometimes," Smitty said.

III

"Yeah," said Murphy. "But it's the parts you can't remember. You get the feeling that that's where you belong. There was a whore I went with once, and I keep thinking of her all the time."

"Must have been a good lay."

"That's the hell of it," said Murphy. "I never did lay her. I couldn't. I guess maybe it was because I had too much to drink, but I don't know. I kept thinking and thinking I'd seen her some place before."

"Some of those babes get around," said Smitty.

"No," said Murphy. "I know I never saw her before, but she reminded me of something I felt once, or someone I knew. I guess it must've been when I was a kid. I felt happy like a kid while I was in her room, and I remember in the morning while I was walking back to the ship, I felt like the first day of school, and I didn't want to go." He broke off and laughed. "This may sound funny," he said, "but I used to think a lot I should've married that girl."

"They make good wives, lots of times," Smitty admitted. "I know a couple of guys who married whores, and they had no kick coming."

"I wish the sun would come out," said Murphy. "I wish to christ they'd get the engines fixed, and we'd start moving."

"Why?" asked Smitty. "Is this gal in Baltimore?"

"I don't know. Funny, I remember so many things, and I can't remember that. I don't know if I met her in Baltimore or Shanghai

FOG

or Marseilles. Sometimes I'm not even sure I didn't just dream of her, and that I never met her at all." He gripped the rail and leaned forward, peering into the impenetrable greyness.

"Well," said Smitty. "Maybe you'll run across her some time. But there ain't no use looking for her down there."

IV

"I wish this fog would lift," said Murphy. "I wish to christ this fog would lift!"

"Steady!" warned Smitty. "You almost went over that time, and in a soup like this, they'd never find you."

Without turning from the water, Murphy said: "Smell that!"

Smitty sniffed obediently. "Coal smoke," he said, "and hemp and rust and fog."

"Sure," said Murphy, "and you smelled them a million times before."

"That's right."

"But where? Where?"

"All over. What difference does it make?"

"I don't know. I keep thinking that maybe if I could remember, maybe I could figure out where I left the biggest part of me. Then maybe I could go back. Then I keep thinking that it's scattered all over the oceans of the world, and I keep thinking that the fog will never lift. And sometimes I think how nice it would be to stop thinking and close my eyes and open my mouth and let the fog come in, and sleep and sleep and sleep. . . ."

V

"Did you hear that?" asked the captain.

The second mate shook his head. "No, what?"

"It sounded like a splash. Like a splash, and then a scream."

"Probably a gull. Sounds carry in the fog."

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"Go look over the port rail," the captain said. "I swear I saw Murphy leaning over the rail about half an hour ago, before the fog closed in, and he's been kind of strange lately."

"Yeah," said the mate. "I noticed it, too. Kind of absent-minded. As though he was looking for something."

The captain watched the mate fade into nothingness, then he turned his glance outward and upward. "Christ," he said. "I wish the fog would lift."

Dog Down the Deadlights

EXCERPTS FROM A NOVEL BY HILLEL FRIMET

"BUTCHER-WAGONS—? What do you mean butcher-wagons?"

The army psychiatrist tapped his pen on the table.

"What do you mean, Goddard?"

Sam Goddard looked out the window, at the ceiling, at the floor, at a Red Cross poster on the wall demanding *Give!* and moved in his chair.

"I mean hospital ships, Doc. I served on one. *Gladiola*, she was called. Named after a flower. They're always named after plants or flowers. No plain names for those butcher-wagons, Doc;—nice poetic ones, like, *Marigold*, *Dogwood*, *Magnolia*, *Chrysanthemum*, *Clematis*—"

"Never mind that!" The pen tapped again. "At what age did you stop wetting your bed?"

"Wet my bed?" Sam stood up and walked up and down the room. What is this man talking about? He stopped before the poster and stared into the cold eyes of the woman with the outstretched hand. He turned around.

"Wet my bed? Is the whole place full of crosses because I pissed in my bed when I was small? Are the seas filled with the stench of *casts* because I—?"

"Answer my question," said the psychiatrist. "We must have the facts."

Sam looked at the man's floating eyes and saw the rolling waves. The sea was all kinds of blue and green and down where the hull and the water met, where the screw stirred up foam, the green was *sharp*. The water was thick-looking, solid; it looked as if you could walk on it.

When did he stop wetting his bed? What about the missing arms

AMERICAN VANGUARD

and legs? What about the men who died on the way? What about—?

"Facts—?" he shouted. "What facts? What will you say? I'll tell you what! Lies, you'll tell! A pack of lies!" His face was wet all over. He wiped it with his hand and began to walk again. . . .

II

That butcher-wagon, the *Gladiola* . . . She was docking. It was a sunny day. So bright that the sooty deck looked almost clean. Everyone not on ward duty was out on deck leaning against the railings. He was in his ward with Peggy Anderson and the ward doctor, Captain Higgins. Through the porthole they could see all that went on outside.

A large troopship packed with replacements came up alongside of them. Every bit of space on the decks, on the bridge, on the sides of the smokestacks, in the lifeboats, and in the rafts, was filled with men. Two or three pairs of eyes strained out of every porthole. Peggy looked at him.

"Are you thinking the same thing I am?" he asked her. She nodded.

When the litters began to stretch down the long dock and around a corner, the replacements just stared. It suddenly seemed to grow dark out there.

Then the wounded started to come into his ward one after another, and he had to go to work. He and Jimmy Cobino directed the litter bearers to their assigned beds.

Their first man turned on his side as if to slide himself on to the bed. "Don't strain yourself," Sam told him. "We'll take care of you." Then Jimmy removed his blankets.

His right leg was gone, and his stump was in a cast. On the cast was written, "Good luck! Bon Voyage! Stay home. Buy War Bonds." Underneath were signatures of his friends.

Sam felt shame come over him. He looked at Jimmy and Jimmy at him.

"Who wants to buy one shoe cheap?" the man said.

DOG DOWN THE DEADLIGHTS

Jimmy stopped chewing his gum. He stabbed his eyes into Sam's and hung on, and Sam felt as if Jimmy's eyes had gripped his hand.

Their next man was named Joe. He had one stump, a big hole in his other leg, and a "scratch" on his head. He was as light as a puppy.

Then came a mountain boy from Tennessee with a blood clot in a short stump. Sam wondered how long the man would last.

When all the beds were filled, Sam and Jim took hold of the movable dressing table and followed Peggy and Captain Higgins.

Peggy was good with her fingers when dressing the steaklike ends of stumps. She kidded with the men, and they liked her. Lollipop, they called her.

Joe held up a snapshot. "Hey, Lollipop, wanna see my girl?"

"Sure," said Peggy.

"Close all portholes below the main deck . . ." The voice came from the amplifiers. "Shut watertight doors . . . in the shaft alley . . . between the engine room . . . and the evaporating room. And d-o-g d-o-w-n deadlights for the night . . ."

The mountain boy grabbed the spring of the upper bed and tried to sit up. There was fear in his eyes.

"Pretty soon you'll be home again," Peggy said without looking at him. She scooped penicillin jelly with a wooden tongue depressor out of the jar Sam held for her, smeared it on the red meat, then fished cuts of sterile gauze out of a glass crock with her pincers. "Won't that be something?"

He smiled—a tense, wet smile.

"Hold up his leg!" Peggy ordered, meaning his stump.

Sam held it and Peggy began to bandage and he lowered his gaze and followed the turns of the gauze. How heavy that short piece of thigh felt, and how *repulsive*. . . . He wanted to drop it and run. But he was ashamed of his feeling of revulsion, ashamed, also, that he had two legs instead of one like the man whose stump he held in his wet hands, and he wanted the man to know he was ashamed.

He looked up into his face. The man was grinning. His face was

grey, and he grinned. They always grinned, these milk-givers. They knew what had happened to them, but they didn't know why it had happened to them. They couldn't know, these pieces of former men; they had never questioned much; they did what they were told to do—that was all.

Crosses, they knew. That, yes. All kinds of crosses. Their minds were held by them. Red crosses, black crosses, steel crosses, straight, hooked, upside-down—it didn't matter much what kind they were, just so they were crosses. They lived with them, and they died with them.

"The final cross finishes the job begun long ago . . ." he said aloud.

Peggy looked up at him and yelled, "Hold up his leg and stop talking to yourself!"

Their colonel came by on his tour of inspection, took the mountain boy's yellowing hand for a moment, then went on to shake hands with other men who had hands to shake with. "I am going to make the *Gladiola* a happy ship," he said to them, peering at them with his near-sighted eyes.

Out on the dock workmen were loosening the lines. The men on the troopship hid below. They weren't going to give the *Gladiola* a send-off. Nobody gave her a send-off. When her lines were hoisted, the *Gladiola* just moved off; that's all there was to it.

The casts began to smell. He wouldn't forget, he could never forget, that stench that had suddenly embraced him and suffocated him. It was everywhere; there was no getting away from it; it was in his lungs, in his eyes, in his stomach; it was in the ocean itself.

The mountain boy grew worse. He kept asking for water. Sam held a saggy, dripping paper cup of water to the man's lips with one hand and wiped the sweat from his stiffening face with his other hand until the chaplain came. Then Sam went out on deck.

From the open portholes of the main deck came the smells of gangrene, of pus, of the casts, and stirred the air. . . .

He moved away from the portholes, walking toward the bow of

DOG DOWN THE DEADLIGHTS

the ship. He must have some clean air before going back to his ward. . . . A hundred and twenty casts covering hot, rotting meat. . . . The big crosses on the smokestacks burned with persistence. . . .

III

These red crosses . . . they reminded him of the Statue of Liberty. The same arrogance; the same persistence; the same guarding to make sure enough were going. She had leaned forward and winked at them as they passed her coming out of the harbor, then after they had passed her, she had leaned back, winked at the dripping sun and guffawed, and the sun rubbed her greasy hands together, her hanging tits shaking like the breasts of jellied women running on their heels to catch a bus.

"Liberty—that's me!" she had shouted after them. "Don't ever forget that!—W-e-e-e did it befo-r-r-re . . . and w-e-e-e-e can do it again . . . ha, ha, ha. . . ." Her laugh made the sun's tits shake even more.

"W-a-a-l-k-k-k on the sun-n-n-y s-s-s-side of t-h-h-h-e streee-e-e-t. . . . Smile . . . smile . . . smile. . . ."

There had been an understanding between the two, between the one sitting up there dripping fat, and the other standing guard to make sure enough were going.

The pitching deck under his feet sank deeper with each pitch as he stumbled forward. The sea reached over for him. . . . On the sun deck desk officers were making love to nurses off duty.

When he came around to the lee side, he saw Jimmy standing near the doors of their ward. The doors were wide open. Jimmy was motioning to him to come right on.

"The mountain boy's done for—" he said. "Come back in." Sam went in.

The chaplain was gone. The embalmer's helper was at work. He was stuffing cotton into the mountain boy's rectum, his nostrils, his ears, then he bent his penis forward, wound gauze around it, and tied

AMERICAN VANGUARD

the ends into a bow. "That's that!" he said, straightening the bow. "Not bad—if I say so myself. . . ." He turned to Sam. "Don't stand here watching me, man—get a litter!"

Sam and Jimmy put the mountain boy on a litter, covered him with a sheet, and started to stagger across the big, hundred-and-twenty-bed ward. The *Gladiola* rolled over on one side, and the sea came up from the bottom and poured salt over all. From the amplifiers the bosuns chanted, "Ship's crew—stand by! Close all port-holes and weather doors . . . and d-o-g d-o-w-n deadlights for the night. . . ." The men vomited over the sides of the beds.

With each roll and lurch the sheet slid downward, and when they came by Joe, it fell off and showed the little bow. They lowered the litter, covered it with the sheet again, and kept on. Then, as they waited for the elevator, the sheet blew off again. The men stared in silence.

IV

That night Sam lay looking up at Jimmy's bunk above him wondering what he was thinking about. Sam knew he was awake. Then Sergeant Gibbons was shaking him.

"On your feet, Sam! Morgue detail!"

He got up, called Jimmy, and together they went to the lobby. Outside it was dark. About fifty half-dressed men stood around in a stupor.

"The holds were full, so we put the milk in the morgue," Sergeant Gibbons was saying. "Now we gotta clean it out."

It was still dark when they got through, and Gibbons said, "You men can go back to sleep now."

"Back to sleep?" said Jimmy. "It'll take me weeks to fall asleep again!"

"You? A tough guy—!"

"Shut up, Gibbons!" Jimmy shouted. "You keep your mouth shut!" His face burned.

Gibbons didn't say a word. He turned around and walked away.

DOG DOWN THE DEADLIGHTS

V

After that Sam began to have nightmares. The stumps came and dripped blood all over him. On the night before they docked in Charleston, the legless men drew a circle around his bunk. They took hold of each other's arms, or of the wire mesh covering the sausagelike ends, and began to dance. Round and round they danced . . . and skipped . . . and ran . . . they all raised their stumps and squirted blood in his face.

He woke, and lay open-mouthed, listening to his temples. Then he got up and groped his way out on deck.

He leaned over the railing and stared down at the wake of the ship. "You will not tell of the condition of the patients, their number, or their type of injury—" was the order on the bulletin board. How long will these butcher-wagons keep hauling these pieces? The phosphorus glowed like still fireflies. . . .

How many years has it been since that morning in March when with heads burrowed in the raised collars of their overcoats, helmeted, with full pack, they stood on a railway platform in Atlantic City, listening to their names being called?

"Bates . . . Goddard . . . Cobino . . . Benchman . . . Casagna . . . Ottel . . ."

Check and double check. No one must be left out. To spare a single name would anger the men who build hospital ships, dress them in innocent white, and name them after flowers.

"Companyyyy . . . teen—hut! Leeeaft—hace! . . . Forrrd—harch!"

Few people were on the streets. The few turned their heads and squinted. Haven't we got enough wounded already? Every day they bring more. From far away they come.

"Hut! . . . Hup! . . . Threep! . . . Fourp! . . ." Medics—pill rollers—bedpan commandos—your weapons are hypos and ducks, sulfa and bandages, but you gotta march like the infantry, damn you!—"Hut! . . . Hup! . . ."

A stiff building with shiny windows. The England General

AMERICAN VANGUARD

Hospital. They stood in a large courtyard, "at ease" with their packs on their backs, smoking cigarettes, waiting for orders. Men leaning on crutches stood at windows above them. Nurses came, smiled down, waved their hands, and walked away again. Another batch of medics—.

Lieutenant Bambridge gave them a talk. The War Department wants men for the infantry. Then Gibbons said, "If any you guys wanna go—" he stopped and smiled—"report to me. Dismissed."

They threw their packs to the stone floor and stood in small groups looking at each other. The infantry? Who will go?

Jimmy said: "I ain't goin'. Not me, Joe. My old man was in the other one; he says they're all the same."

Benchman wasn't going, either. "When I first got in, I volunteered to drive a jeep and wound up pushing a wheelbarrow," he said. "I was green then."

But others were going. Men who had shared latrines and their letters with him were going. No more carrying pots, no more jeers from marching infantrymen—"What's this, sick call?"—when they met them on hikes; now they will carry rifles instead of litters, and when caught in the madness, will cry, "Medic! Medic! . . ." like a child lost, and then will say, "I was a medic once myself. . . ." Men will do what they don't want to do.

VI

Ward duty. Casts, crutches, empty stares, sobs. Men gasping in their sleep. The rushing sea crashed against the building, rattled the windows, and seemed to seep through the glass. He opened the case book and read: "Private —. Shell wound. Amputation. Private first class—. Wounds penetrating, multiple. Both legs, left buttock, left thigh. Amputation Guillotine, left leg. Anemia. Private —. Multiple wounds. Right temporal region, right angle of mouth, right arm, left leg, and chest wall. Fracture compound, comminuted, skull, right temporal, right parietal. Wound lacerated, right cerebrum. Foreign body, shrapnel, right cerebrum."

DOG DOWN THE DEADLIGHTS

He shut the book, lit a cigarette, and inhaled. "If any you guys wanna go—" Gibbons smiled when he said it. . . .

On the boardwalk, 5th Army men hobbled supported by crutches or canes. The gay, colorful crowds of tourists were indifferent to all but themselves. They swept ahead and jostled the wounded.

VII

Invasion of France. They marched through streets of the staging area toward assigned barracks. No singing this time. They were veterans now; they knew the score.

Naked they shuffled through a gauntlet of processors who marked their bodies with colored crayon. They had been finger-printed, photographed, graded, numbered, tagged, and cased; they had made their wills; but the pay-off came when their bodies were smeared with chalk: they were being told that they were marked men.

They were assigned to a ship. "It's named *Gladiola*—" Bambridge said, and they laughed in his face. "You sure it ain't *Lilac*?" Jimmy yelled from the ranks, and Bambridge had to laugh, too. Then he looked at the ground. He was wise to the swindle, that Joe was. Never gave bull-dung either; just straight talk like: "Let's go, men. We gotta go—"

Then came final orders. Destination—permanent home port and censorship regulations. In the last minute another order came. Bambridge was removed from command of the outfit and replaced by a man from a casual pool nearby. The new man was arrogant. He reminded them of the officer in a class on fractures who said the wounded are brought home not for humane reasons but to be patched up and sent back to duty.

Handy word, "duty."

How many years has it been? . . .

AMERICAN VANGUARD

VIII

He felt he had to go to his ward again. He had to remember. He had to remember every detail. . . .

He went to MN-7. The smells came at him in waves. He went in. It was dark except for the red bulbs at the doors and he blinked. Casagna sat in a chair near the latrine, on watch. The men coughed, groaned, mumbled. . . .

"How long will this go on?" asked Casagna.

"The salt in the sea is bitter," Sam said, and walked into the office. He opened the drawer where the field medical tags were kept and put his hand in. He heard footsteps on the stairway. He banged the drawer shut and stood backed against the steam radiator near the porthole, facing the door.

The Officer of the Day came in.

"Where is the nurse?"

"With Joe."

"Are the patients resting?"

"They got hypos, but they groan."

"Why are you near the steam? Are you cold?"

"Yes, sir. It's chilly tonight."

"Chilly, hey?" The officer came up to him and looked in his eyes. "Have you got a thermometer?"

"A thermometer?" Sam stared at him. "A thermometer—? Look! . . ." he screamed. "The legless men are running. Look! . . ."

The officer looked at him sharply. "What are you doing in the ward now, Goddard? You're off duty. You will stay out of the ward when off duty, you hear?" His face became set. "Tell the nurse to give you a sedative, then go to bed. And don't let me catch you here when I come back."

When the officer left, Sam opened the drawer again and took out the tags. There was blood on them. Dried, hardened blood, old blood now, but as he held them in his hands it seemed to grow warm and to flow again. He looked at his hands. They were white and wet and cold.

DOG DOWN THE DEADLIGHTS

He read the names, the names of next of kin, and thought of the new, fresh, whole men who were taking their places. Whole men—whose pieces they will bring home on their next trip. There will be more tags. And as they unload them with their stained tags pinned to their clothes, a band will play, the volunteers—those willing milk-givers of the Red Cross—will hand out their doughnuts and coffee, and the paid professionals will watch and supervise, and smile their native, molded smiles, and the dock workers will think of their dinners.

Then they'll go back for another load.

VI

INTROSPECTIONS AND
RECOLLECTIONS

The Girl's Banana

A SKETCH BY WILLIAM CARL BONDARENKO

SHE was six. I was five and a half. She wore green. I wore all colors.

She was standing in the school yard. I was, too. So we met. She was peeling her banana. I watched. She leaned over to drink from the fountain. I walked up to her and leaned over, too, and took a big bite out of her banana. She stopped drinking and screamed. I ran away.

I ran all the way home and had lunch and came back to school and walked into the classroom. Little green dress was there, and she was crying. She looked at my teacher and pointed at me. I started to run, but I changed my mind. I wanted to see what would happen, so I stayed. But I was sorry.

My teacher put her fingers around my neck and brought me down to the principal's office. Little green dress came along to tell on me. Her teacher gave me a bad look when we walked in. She was holding the banana peels.

The principal was big and fat and asked why I took a bite out of the little girl's banana. She said 'little girl,' but I was littler than she was. Anyway, I didn't answer. She asked me again. I didn't answer again. My teacher asked me why I took a bite. I didn't answer her. She said for me to look her in the face. I looked out the window. She said turn around to her. I looked down at my shoelaces. They were brown, and one was untied. Little green dress's teacher stuck her finger in my face and said I should talk if I knew what was good for me. I knew what was good for me. I didn't talk.

The principal took hold of my shoulder and wiggled it. She didn't hurt me, but she was big and fat and she could have. She said I should hurry up and talk and said didn't I have a tongue. I had a

AMERICAN VANGUARD

tongue. But it didn't want to move. She asked me if I ate lunch. I didn't answer. She asked me if I was hungry. I held my breath. She asked me if my mother fed me at home. My lips were beginning to quiver. She asked me again if my mother fed me. If she had been a smart principal, she would have known that my mother fed me. Her mother fed her. I began to cry. Everybody started to talk at once, and I was getting mad. Little green dress looked at me, and tears rolled down my cheek. And I was breathing with my throat.

The principal pushed me into a corner and said not to turn around. She said that would fix me. It was all right. But little green dress wasn't. She started to cry. The principal told her not to cry, because I was being fixed. I wanted to turn around and tell her that I was very all right, but I didn't because if she was smart, then she would know. If she was smart.

Everybody's feet went out of the office except the principal's. Her feet walked to the desk. I could hear her breathing. She didn't breathe right, not like my mother. I wanted to tell her, but I didn't think she would breathe like I wanted her to; she was stubborn.

I stood in the corner looking. The corner turned into two corners. Then three. Then I couldn't count any more, and my head was bothering me. I was thirsty, too. I wanted to ask the principal if I could go out in the hall and get a drink of water. But I didn't. Couldn't she tell I was thirsty? If I was the principal and she was me, I would let her go and get a drink. I was getting tired, too, and I wanted to ask her if I could sit down. I wanted to ask her a lot of things, but nothing came out of my mouth. So I waited.

I got sleepy waiting, so I closed my eyes. No more corners, and I fell asleep standing up.

But I didn't wake up standing. I was straight up and down, but I was on the floor looking up. For a minute I thought the world was upside down. But it wasn't.

I got up and walked to the door and looked out into the hallway. Nobody was there. Everything was quiet. I walked back to the corner where I was supposed to wait. I waited until it got dark outside. I thought a hundred years went by. I walked out of the office

THE GIRL'S BANANA

and held my breath until I reached the heavy doors. Then my legs ran all the way home so fast that I was there before I even thought about running home.

I walked into the kitchen. The whole family was having supper, and they were laughing and screaming about me biting the girl's banana. I ran out of the kitchen and through the parlor and down the front steps. It was dark and lonely out. I didn't want to go crazy, so I sat down on the curb and cried.

Little green dress came by wearing a red dress. I stopped crying and stuck my tongue out at her. She stuck her tongue out at me. I stuck my tongue out at her again, and she ran away. She skipped down the block and turned the corner, and I hated her. I got up from the curb and walked across the street. I didn't know what to do with myself, so I sat down on the curb over there and looked at the lights in the windows of my house. Then I cried again. Nobody understood me. Not even me.

I looked at the moon. It was big and round and white. It looked just like a hole in the sky. I wanted to crawl right through and see what heaven was like. But I didn't do it. I wanted to stay awhile and think of little green dress's red dress. I loved her. If I knew why, I would know why I took a bite out of her banana.

The Biggest Horses in the World

A SKETCH BY HELEN POWERS

THE horses were bigger than anything I knew. They were bigger than Spence or my dad, and Mike looked like a rabbit alongside them. My legs wouldn't fit around them the way I could fit them to Mike's back. . . . Next to my dad and Spence and Mike, I loved them better than anything in the world. I loved the bigness and the smell and the smooth feel of them and the gentle way they had of nibbling sugar or carrots out of my hand when Spence held me up to them. I loved the softness of their noses against the palm of my hand and the hay sweetness of their breath in my face as I stroked them. I was always in awe of the yellow teeth that were like the keys of the piano in the living room at home. I used to wonder what would happen to my hand if they were to bite it by mistake, but I wasn't afraid, because I knew that they were as gentle as Spence, and that they loved me, too, because I loved them almost as much as Spence did.

Next to my dad, Spence was the best person I knew. Maybe because he was so much like the horses. Big and strong and gentle and good-natured and filled with love for Prince and Doll and Mike and small children. He was big. Bigger than my father, who was tall and wide and loved kids and dogs, too. My dad didn't love horses, though, and that was the special bond between Spence and me. And next to the smell of the horses, the special smell of manure and urine and sweaty flanks and hay sweet breath, Spence's smell was special, too. Along with the man sweat and tobacco and bay rum smell, the horse smell was there, too, mixed into his clothing. It was almost as good as the horse smell, and the times when he stopped in at our house, and he and my dad would sit at the kitchen table and drink from the smallest glasses there were, I would lean against him

THE BIGGEST HORSES IN THE WORLD

and press my nose into his shirt and breathe as deep as I could, until I would feel dizzy from holding the smell of him in my lungs. He would rub my head then, the way he rubbed Doll and Prince, smoothing and rumpling my hair, and I would know from the way he did it that he loved me.

People in our town thought Spence was a little crazy. Because he wouldn't give up Doll and Prince and buy a truck to do his draying business. They didn't know how much Spence loved his horses. They had never seen him or heard him in the barn, putting them up for the night, giving them grain and hay that smelled like a memory of summer, rubbing his cheek against their soft noses, calling them sweethearts and his own darlings, patting them gently and tenderly with his big hard hands. They didn't know that about him, but I did. And it was the special wordless bond. In its wordlessness it was akin to the bond which existed between Mike and me.

Mike was Spence's hunting dog. He was the best cougar dog in the county. He knew it, too. And because of it, he had small patience or liking for people who failed to treat him with the respect due a dog who could tree a cougar when no other dog could. I respected his prowess, related to me by Spence and my dad, and because of that respect, he gave me his liking. He let me get astride him and pretend that he was Doll or Prince; and after I got my job, he would wait for me in the late afternoon when it was time for Spence to come home with the horses. We would go together to meet Spence and Doll and Prince. Mike filled an important need in my life; he was a sounding board for my ideas, and he gave me the companionship so necessary during the time a child feels more kinship for animals than he does for people. And Mike filled the heartbreak place in my heart that came of my mother's refusal to let me keep a dog. Having an allergy to animal fleas didn't keep Mike and me apart, and I could never understand my mother's reasoning, since I always came home with Mike's fleas anyway.

The job was an important thing in my life, too. I chose it because it gave me the perfect opportunity to be with Spence and Mike and Doll and Prince. And it relieved my mother of what I considered

AMERICAN VANGUARD

an indignity. Where her garden was involved, my mother was an uninhibited woman. She could ignore the derision of neighbors who took a dim view about her going out into the street to shovel up the droppings of wandering cows and passing horses. The dignity that a four-year-old can bring to such a job is beyond the derision of even the stupidest adult. When spring came on, and Mother lived in her world of seed catalogues, I met Spence every afternoon, and each afternoon was a time of perfection, when Spence stopped the team where Mike and I waited, and he leaned down to lift me onto the seat beside him, while Mike jumped into the wagon bed.

He would hand me the reins and cluck to Doll and Prince, and they would settle into the harness for the steep uphill pull. That was the wonderful moment. When Spence's big hands lifted me from the ground and placed me safely on the seat beside him and passed the reins that were smooth and oily from long use into my eager hands. That was the moment I lived for all day long, when I sat there on the hard wagon seat, my body swaying to the uneven rhythm of the moving wagon, hearing the creak of harness and wagon bed and the dull thud of hooves striking the ground solidly and ponderously, my eyes glued to the big slow-moving haunches of Doll and Prince, and breathing as deeply as I could of the good smell. The good smell that was the best smell in the world: the manure urine sweaty flanks sweet hay breath smell of horses, the tobacco bay rum sweaty man smell of Spence, and the faintly acrid sunny dusty smell of Mike. I always wanted that time to go on forever, to have the barn and the feeding time and the pail-filling time a time that was never reached. . . .

I never grew too old to cease enjoying that late afternoon time with four well loved and loving beings. I was seven, I guess, when Prince died. Spence cried. It was the first time I had seen a man cry, and it frightened me, but I understood it, too, for I knew how much Prince had meant to him. I cried, too, because grey old Prince was part of a pattern of love. With Prince gone, the pattern was broken. And the good times, the really good times, were gone with him. Spence put Doll out to pasture and bowed to progress and bought a

THE BIGGEST HORSES IN THE WORLD

Ford truck. The Ford was never very satisfactory. It earned Spence's living, but it scared Doll every time Spence started the motor, and she took to staying at the bottom end of the pasture until it was either gone in the morning or safely parked for the night. Spence put up with the Ford, but he never really liked it or understood it. It was an inferior tool to be used in his work, and he was glad to put it away nights and go pet old Doll when she would finally come up from the bottom of the pasture. Mike stopped meeting Spence with me after the time Spence let the clutch out too hurriedly, and Mike got thrown just as he was clambering into the truck bed. And to me it was just another Ford. . . .

Even with Prince gone and the Ford there, the bond was still there between us. Sometimes, sitting on the riverbank waiting for a fish to bite, or beside a campfire after a day of cougar hunting, we would mention Prince: what a good lead horse he'd been, how gentle he'd been, how well he had worked with Doll, who didn't like pulling in harness with another horse. We both seemed to think back to Prince and the good days when we'd be sitting watching my dad on the other side of the fire, carefully breaking and cleaning and oiling a gun. It was the way he did it, I guess. My dad loved guns the way Spence loved horses. I reckon, watching my dad being so loving with his guns, it reminded Spence of the way he had cared for and groomed Prince and Doll before the Ford. I know that it reminded me of his hands petting them, because my dad handled the guns so tenderly and carefully.

The cougar hunts were fine. I liked them. And I liked seeing first-hand how Mike got to be the best cougar dog in the county. And after I had seen Mike trail and tree a spitting cougar, my former untested respect became admiration. . . . But nothing was ever as good or as satisfying as those times when I was four years old, sitting up on the wagon seat with Spence, breathing in the wonderful smells of horses and man and dog, feeling the love, and watching the two horses, who were bigger than anything I knew, leaning into the harness as they pulled homeward to food and rest and warmth.

Captain's Beach

PROLOGUE TO A NOVEL BY SIGRID DE LIMA

"READY NOW?"

"Everything's ready."

"All right?"

"Yes."

"Go ahead."

"Go ahead," somebody repeated.

Go ahead, go ahead, go ahead . . . "Steady now," they said. "Everything is going to be all right." All right. All right . . .

"There . . ." I tried to answer. I don't know whether I shouted or whether it was just in my mind. "Yes, it's all right," they said, "it's all . . ."

Wide and sandy, Captain's Beach. Here the totality of the universe is composed of the four elements of the ancients—land, water, air, and the distant fire of the sun.

"Come on. We're going to take you in. It will be fun, you'll like it." I was afraid. "We'll hold you." "I'll hold you," said Johnny. He was the youngest of us all and scarcely seven years old. They took me up, all of them, in their skinny strong arms. "It will be much easier when we get you in the water. You will float; you will like it."

I was afraid. Then I knew the water is cold as ice. "The water is warm today," they said. They had laced their hands under me, and my feet and legs pointed straight out to sea. "Feel there." They lowered me, and slowly I felt the chill. "There, you see it's warm. You'll like it."

I was afraid.

The sea made a terrible sound. The children's cries were shrill and small above the roar. I looked up at the gulls and listened to their creaking cries. The wave lifted me. The children still held me

CAPTAIN'S BEACH

tight, but the restless water lifted me powerfully on its back. I was afraid.

"There, isn't that fun?" Miriam looked at me anxiously. The frothy waters rose to her waist. Subsided, left a dark stain on her bathing suit. Johnny was holding my head. I was afraid he would let the water run into my ears and wash over my face. I tried to lift my head.

I could feel my heart beating terribly and a warm sick feeling in my belly. I was lifted up again, tugged inshore and then away by the restless water. Then the children took me back to my sand dune again. The wind flapped over me. It was colder than the ocean.

"The sun will warm you up quickly enough." I was heavier than before. The children staggered under my weight, but they held me tighter than ever. "There, wasn't that fun? You liked it, didn't you?" They laid me down on the sand. They propped my head up.

"You can watch us now. You are all right. Call us when you want us to cover you up. You get an awful burn if you're not careful when you're wet like that."

They ran down to the sea again and, not clumsy now, ran into the water. Shouting.

II

Captain's Beach—captain of what whaling vessel, pirate ship, or fisherman I know not. There were rolling dunes, and on top of one perched the bleached hollow ribs of the hull of a forty-foot schooner. Quite close by, strange in their similarity and contrast, were the actual giant bones of a whale. The restless ocean had long before found a lower level, but the swirls and eddies of sand were awash over the two skeletons to remind them both that they belonged to the sea.

Here it was that my father brought me that summer's day and I lay on the dunes, this scanty barred shade protecting me from the sun, while the other children played down at the water's edge. Swimming sometimes or building castles in the wet sand, collecting sea

AMERICAN VANGUARD

shells in little piles, yet in reality leaving no more trace than the crying, wheeling gulls and tiny sandpipers foraging in the ooze under the instantly domed breakers.

But I could not run and play with the others, for I was paralyzed, and day long must rest in the shadow of the two skeletons. Perhaps sometimes the children came to me and talked or fetched me things. And that once they all took me up with them, carrying my weight in their skinny arms, and thrust me into the water. But then they had brought me back, and they were gone again.

I suppose I was aloof. Here I was a stone that was not a stone, a plant that must be ministered to. I had no roots of my own; I was more hollow than the stiff grasses on the beach that draw nourishment from the sand. I had ever to be carried about. Like a bucket of water lifted from the sea, I had lost the power of motion.

I had books to amuse me, and pictures, and simple toys that I could enjoy looking at often, but I hardly thought of any of these, contenting myself with watching the tireless sameness of the blue sky, the white sand dunes, and the ocean. It was a spacious, glittering light world that made me close my eyes and bury my face in my useless arms. I slept and I dreamed and awakened to see not far from me a gull, rounded and smoothed as a worn shell or pebble of the beach by the same action of the waves and the wind.

My impression of my companions is strange, for I remember them always poised and silhouetted against the sky and the horizon. Inland we do not see people thus, but these children on Captain's Beach became peculiarly monumental with this added dimension, actors with the whole flat earth as backdrop.

Actually none was more than eleven or twelve and not particularly well grown for that. If I had been able to stand erect, little Johnny on tiptoe would have been far shorter than I, but I remember him standing at my head like a towering pillar.

Miriam had dark hair as heavy as seaweed that when she stood over me was whipped by the wind into a mighty dark flame. She was always graceful when she moved, and there was a lithe toughness about her. This contradiction expressed her nature, too, that was

CAPTAIN'S BEACH,

at the same time tenderly idealistic and harshly strident, dominating. Perhaps this dualism was that of her race, that is gracious enough to produce the Testament but hardy enough to survive the persecution of the ages.

On the day of Captain's Beach none of us knew of these things, and all I remember of Miriam is this and that she was beautiful when she stood over me and against the sky. When she was gone, I turned and looked at the crumbled prints her narrow bare feet had made in the soft dry sand.

Garrick was the oldest and strongest of us all. Stringy muscles that promised later roundness stood out in his narrow arms and across his back. His eyes took their color from what he looked at. Here at Captain's Beach they were blue, blue from the sky and the sea, grey when the sea and the sky altered, darkened with the night. I remember Garrick as he stood poised on the beach. He threw straight and far a stone out to sea. His aim was good, and far off the smooth side of a roller was punctured and spilled a white foam.

Frank was bluff and humorous, with an exaggerated boyishness that would persist long after he had attained maturity. His head was a smaller cube set upon his squarish body. Regular features, none playing a dominant role, lent his face a balance and restraint. I remember his legs, straight and sturdy, far apart as he stood above me, arms akimbo, his hands resting on his hips, his head thrown back as he smiled at the wind. But there was a stiffness about his neck, so that when he looked down at me, he bent a little at the waist and guided his eyes with his lowered lids.

But I do wrong to describe so much of my companions. What remains is actually a fragment, a frieze of children against the sky, caught in a single pose, arrested in the midst of motion as by an irresistible Pompeian ash.

Tar pits, sandstones, shales preserve the active dinosaur, sabered tiger, and Cenozoic mastodon, but in a form as frozen and as immutable as the stone. The long eons of the Egyptians continue only in the insensate yield of tombs. Those who compose our bones do so for all eternity.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

III

I, half dead, cut off from the power of motion, dependent upon others for my every function, a parasite upon my kind, with roots extending laterally to my fellows, not into a natural earth, I, a stick of wood, a rock, a lump of clay, alone remain to tell of these children upon Captain's Beach.

Thus Miriam and Johnny, Garrick, and Frank exist only as they appear that single day when for an instant their shadows fell across me where I lay.

"You all right?" they were saying.

"You liked it, didn't you?"

"It wasn't too cold, was it?"

"Now you must call us to cover you up again."

Then they ran down to the water's edge. Crying, screaming like the wheeling gulls, swift and nimble as the delicate sandpipers. The elements of silence reigned on the beach. I closed my eyes in my barred shade. I slept.

So much time has passed. The sour waves swept over the piled up shells and scattered them again, a beaded scalloped outline. Waves heavy with a load of mica rode up on the shore and washed away the rough castles. The wind raising whirligigs of sand incorporated itself along the beach. The very air trembled in the heat, bleak white the bones of the ship and the whale against a blue sky so permeated by the sun that the eye was blinded to look upon it.

Below the sandpiper children, the gull children were to go separate ways and disappear. They have been my limbs and gave me motion. They took me to the sea, and I rode on its strong back, but now I am alone, alone on that wide, white beach.

I am silent, for who cries out in solitude? Would the skeleton ship and whale give back more than an echo of my own voice, would the pitiless wind carry my words? Will the roar of the waters cease!

The Visit

A SHORT STORY BY NENA O'NEILL

"DO I have to go, too, Mums?"

"Everybody has to go, darling. Come, put on your coat."

"I've got brown buttons on my coat."

Coletta put her forefinger on the middle button and ran it around the groove. Great big brown buttons on soft fuzzy wool. She looked down on the faded rag rug she was standing on, then to the big kitchen table as big as the dining-room table at home. She loved to follow the blue and red flowers around the shiny oilcloth that covered the table.

"Coletta, lift your head."

Coletta obediently raised her face while her mother tied the strings on her bonnet. She searched her mother's face. There were those little wrinkles around the mouth again, like when Daddy told her not to be so concerned, like when she was worried. Her eyes were so far away. They weren't seeing Coletta at all. The faint dust of powder on her face reminded Coletta of the down on peaches and smelled like the rusty sachet bag she found in her mother's drawers.

"Grandma's upstairs getting dressed," Coletta said.

"Yes, dear."

"Is everybody going to go?"

"Of course," one of her aunts remarked as she stood at the stove to see that the fire was well banked. The aunt looked at Coletta's mother. And Coletta looked from one to the other. It was one of those glances between grown-ups that passes over the heads of children. But Coletta knew it all too well. It happened many times when she was near her mother and one of the numerous aunts. They would be talking, Coletta would start listening, and suddenly one of those looks would travel between the two adults. They would

AMERICAN VANGUARD

glance at her, notice her big eyes, say little pitchers have big ears, and change the conversation.

So when she saw the glance, she knew more than to press her questioning about the trip. She looked out the window that faced the large grey shed. There were narrow dusty stairs to the top of it where the bins were. She would climb up the wooden steps and spend hours playing with the thin shiny grains. Scoop it up in both hands, open her fingers and let it slide through, grain after grain, handfuls of slippery grain. And the musky dust, the sweet dry dust, would choke her nostrils and make her cough. And the corn, yellow kernels and red kernels—she would put her whole arms in that bin to feel the coolness. She looked back at her mother who was bustling around the kitchen.

"Can't I stay with Eddie?"

"Eddie will come later, after he has finished his chores. Now, skip! Out to the car."

II

Why was Grandma always such a problem to get in the car? Coletta leaned against the front seat as the aunts got in. Knees and arms bumped her. She wriggled over towards the door, not paying much attention to the chatter and commands from the aunts. "Coletta, get out," said Mother.

"Come on, down you go, baby." And Daddy swung her down to the road.

Mother held the door while Daddy held Grandma's arm and gave her a slight shove. She groaned a little, heaved a big sigh, and settled into place. "Don't need no help," she said. "Get on my lap, Coletta."

Coletta climbed in and sat on her lap. "Mother, let her come back here." Grandma just looked straight ahead, smiled, and said, "Let her sit here." Coletta liked Grandma's lap, even if she did keep slipping off most of the time. It was like a big mountain with a little ledge on it. She often sat on it when Grandma was in the kitchen rocker, not because it was easy to stay there without Grandma's

THE VISIT

arms holding her, but because the mountain was so comfortable to lean against and because she liked to feel the warmth through the calico dress.

When Daddy climbed in and said, "We're off," the car started to move over the bumpy lane. Coletta jiggled back and forth on Grandma's lap. No one was gay, no one was happy, but there was a stir of excitement. Daddy was quiet through the murmur of the aunts' voices. Usually he sat at the wheel with his head pushed back, his arms extended holding tightly to the bouncing wheel, and made funny comments about the car. Daddy was proud of the car, but Coletta sensed that he was not in the mood for her questions about how it worked. His bristly moustache looked lonely without a smile beneath it.

"Where are we going, Daddy?"

"To see your great-grandmother."

"I don't remember my great-grandmother."

"Yes, you do, Coletta," Mother prompted. "Last summer she gave you a piece of candy when we went over. Remember the house with the pond by the road?"

"That's where Calista lives."

"Yes."

"Will Calista be there?"

"Yes."

"Will Grandma, I mean Great-Grandma, give me candy?"

Coletta squirmed around to look at her mother, for she had received no reply. "Will she?" she asked again. Then one of those knowing looks passed between her mother and her Aunt Sara. Aunt Sara's eyes were hard and bright behind her glasses. She pursed her lips and said, "No, you won't get any candy. Your great-grandmother passed away."

"Sara!" her mother said.

"Well, you have to tell her," Sara answered.

Coletta looked at her mother and then turned around for reassurance to her father. "Daddy, what's passed away?"

He looked down at her for a minute, then turned back to the road.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"Well, she . . . she just . . . I guess you'd say she just went away."

"If she went away, how can I see her?"

But Daddy wouldn't look at her again. Coletta looked at the people in the back seat. Even her mother was busy working to get her pocketbook open. No one would look at her. She looked up at Grandma. Coletta could feel the big sigh because she felt the mountain push against her. Her grandmother pulled her closer on her lap and said, "You'll see her, Coletta. She's there, but she's with the angels in heaven."

"Do you mean the angels on the ceiling in the church?"

There was no answer. The car came to a bumpy stop among a number of other cars and trucks in the open lane by the big farmhouse.

III

Daddy was out first and lifted Coletta through the air to the ground. "Let me help you, Mother," he said. "Oh, I can do it for myself, I guess," she answered. Coletta watched her heave the mountain up, heard the thump of her heavy shoes on the running board and then on the ground. She sort of creaked when she moved. She readjusted her hat on her head. Coletta could hear the big pin puncturing the straw hat. They all walked towards the house, Coletta holding her mother's hand.

Coletta tried to step on every crack between the washed-out grey boards of the walk. They were close together and more interesting than the cement sidewalks at home. She looked up occasionally at the many people who greeted the group. Everybody was dressed up, but they all looked so solemn. It wasn't like the Sundays at her grandmother's farm when everybody came to visit and people talked, the men smoked their pipes, and everybody joked about something. Now they would say a few words and stop. Then a few more words. There were long silences in the conversation.

Coletta saw the pond across the lane. The chickens were all over the lawn, cackling. A dog playfully ran after them and chased them

THE VISIT

across the road. "Can't I go and see the little fishes?" They were tiny little black things that slid through the water. Eddie had pointed them out to her one day. She had put her hands in the cold water and tried to catch them, but they slipped away, and she had felt only the faint brush of one against her hand. "Can't I, Mums?"

"Not now, dear. Later." Mother held her hand firmly. The glove was cold. Coletta looked at the big house. It was different from her grandmother's, which had a high narrow porch. This one was low and had a porch running all the way around it. People were sitting in rockers and on benches. There was a long swing that was swaying from chains in the roof around the corner. "Can I swing on the swing?"

"Later, Coletta. We have to see your great-grandmother first."

They stepped on the veranda and walked around the house. As they passed the door to the kitchen, Coletta could smell food cooking. It was a warm fragrant smell, the smell of bread and pie mingling with the steamy hot chromium and dull black iron of the stove. She could see the long skirts of the women through the screen on the door. Their voices were low and warm like the smell of the stove. The buzz faded as the group rounded the corner and approached the door to the back parlor.

IV

Daddy opened the door and waited while they all filed in. The room was cold. There was only one window in the opposite wall, and no sunlight came through it. The only light came from two kerosene lamps on an overhanging shelf on the left wall and a tall candle in the corner. Straight chairs stood empty here against the browning paper on the wall. Some of the chairs and a few benches lined against the wall were filled with people, people who sat silently. They looked up at Coletta and her mother. Some murmured a greeting and dropped their heads down again. One woman had a black rosary in her hands. Coletta looked questioningly at her mother, for she saw rosary beads only in church when they dangled

AMERICAN VANGUARD

and slid against the back of the wooden pews, or at night, like when Aunt Fronie took them off the bed-post. But Coletta's mother was looking at the corner, at the big box in the corner. It had flowers heaped around it, and the flame of the tall candle near it flickered back and forth, throwing shadows on the flowers and the floor.

Coletta looked at her daddy, who was turning his hat round and round in his hand. She looked down at the brown and black flowers on the linoleum. It crackled in the silence as they tiptoed over to the box. From where she stood behind the kneeler in front of the box, Coletta could see only the rim of the box. There was a lid, and the lid was lined with white satin, all pushed together into hills and valleys. Coletta would have liked to touch the satin, push the hills and valleys together, but it looked cold and shiny and much too white.

This wasn't church, but Mother was kneeling in front of the box. Daddy knelt, too. Coletta tugged at her mother's coat. "Mums, why are you kneeling? Is this church?" She whispered, too, because everybody else was whispering.

"I'm praying, dear," her mother said. Then Daddy leaned over and picked her up. "Want to see your great-grandmother?" he whispered in her ear. His breath tickled her neck.

"Isn't she beautiful?" Mother said.

There was Great-Grandmother in the box. She lay very straight and still among more white satin. Only her feet were covered. She was very still. Coletta stared hard at her, waiting for her to open her eyes, but they were closed and white, white like her hand that held the black rosary over the other white hand.

"Isn't she cold?" Coletta asked her mother.

"No, dear." And Mother stared at Great-Grandmother's face.

"Is she sleeping?"

"Yes, she's sleeping."

"She should be cold," Coletta said again as she looked at her face and then at the flowers beside the box. She couldn't smell the flowers. They looked cold, too. There was only the smell of the flame burning and the wax melting and dripping down the side of the candle.

THE VISIT

Coletta's eyes became wider, and her lower lip began to tremble. "Daddy, she doesn't move." And she threw her arms around her father's neck and buried her head in the warmth of his shoulder. "There, there," he said, patting her on the back. "She's only sleeping with the angels."

Coletta squirmed around in her father's arms to get a better view of her great-grandmother. And the angels? If she was sleeping, why didn't she breathe like Grandma, great big breaths that made the middle of her go in and out? She wasn't as big as Grandma. She was very tiny and small in the big box. Coletta wanted to ask more questions, but her mother's lips were tight. Wasn't Great-Grandmother cold? She knew why all the people were quiet and why she had to whisper. Great-Grandmother was sleeping. But she still wanted to ask why she was in the box. Daddy just kept patting her and saying *shhhh*.

Daddy was still holding her as they walked out of the room into the big kitchen. It was warm in the kitchen. People were moving around talking quietly. "I want to get down." Her father swung her down to the floor. She wanted to talk to her mother, but her mother was talking to someone else, and Coletta knew better than to interrupt.

But there was Grandma sitting at the table. She ran over to her and climbed into her lap. Her breathing made the mountain move gently, and it was warm underneath her dress. Coletta looked up at her.

"Grandma, did you see her?"

"Yes, I saw her."

"Grandma, where were the angels?"

Chimera

A SKETCH BY CHARLES MICHAEL DUNN

INSTANTLY he was awake. Or at least that was the way it seemed, but whenever he thought of the incident later, he could never be sure that he had not in fact been dreaming. He lay staring upward into the darkness for some minutes, trying to orient himself, and then with a sudden, quick rush of realization, he started up in the bed, half whispering, half crying aloud: "Mother. . . . Mother!"

She had been so close in that moment that he had actually felt the lush woman-warmth of her, and the slight perfume of her rustling garments had stung his nostrils with the fragrance of a thousand old memories. In his mind's eye there had been projected before him in the darkened room a swift vision of her face, and all the silence whispered with a million remembered inflections, but with one voice: "Hush, child. . . . I've come to kiss you good-night."

He sank back upon the pillows now and closed his eyes. A sound crept softly on his ear, like the hushed rush of dark waters, and he remembered his mother as he had never known her in life. A little child lay in the bed, and the darkness was drowsy with the golden monotone of his mother's voice. He lifted his arms as though in supplication, and instantly he was whirled swiftly upward in the silence and pressed hard against the heat and peace of the woman's body. He spoke unintelligibly into the softness of the woman's skin and laughed gleefully at the place where her throat melted into shoulder. An intoxicating languor of mind and body crept like a slow paralysis over all his faculties, and his one great wish was to become as one with this yielding and faintly shining flesh in which his sleepy face was buried.

CHIMERA

Slowly he was returned to the bed, and now a great fear possessed him that his mother would leave, taking with her the magic and enchantment of her presence. But, no, she did not go. Her face was once more above him, and he slowly and patiently caressed it with his wondering eyes. The tender and melancholy lineaments of the taut, smooth skin fascinated him. He pulled at his mother's garments and swarmed up onto her lap and squealed gleefully into the warm breath from her laughing mouth. The sudden taste of his mother's breath had an effect on him which he could never later define. It stopped his laughter, and for a moment he knelt staring at her half-opened mouth. It had been as though some ancient mystery, some primeval truth, had been secretly made known to him, and he felt himself wondering, groping, casting about in his baby intellect for a word that had not yet been spoken. He saw his mother loamed with earth, and, horror struck, he saw her grow as one with a budding tree, her feet wrapped tight about the gnarly roots. In this one flash of thought he penetrated deep to the mystery of his mother and of all women, and he stood dumbfounded, disembodied as it were, beyond the scene, removed from the moment, tongueless, wordless, filled with awe and fear.

The disintegration had begun.

His privacy was now invaded, and though the face of his mother remained dominant, other faces now called, and whispered, and sighed in the catlike darkness. All the meaningful and unexplained scenes and voices that forever haunted his life, all the stark and painful, mad and joyous, sad and darkly bitter faces, places, times, and conversations which had left their puzzling blots of mystery and wonder deep upon his heart rose like a softly sighing, dream-voiced legion, up before him, beckoning, distant calling, plunging his bewildered spirit down into a sound-dead, black abyss of melancholy.

He sat up in the blackness, confused, lost in time, and his mother's voice, now changed and tinged with death and weariness, spoke for him as she had always spoken for him when he was lost in life, saying:

AMERICAN VANGUARD

“ . . . I hear so much. I see. I know. I am alive at four o'clock in the morning. Faint rustlings, sly and secret sounds, thread through the steaming streets; men dream; idiot-wild visions, terror visaged, screaming brainlessly, crawl squashing through the mad and mindless halls of sleep; dead faces are clasped in lonely, aching arms behind the portcullis of sleep-clenched eyes; men stand forty years ago upon a greening hill and shout that mighty love shall last forever, and smile into a tender face; men wake in dark night cubes and cry out unspeakably to disenchantment and to vanished Springs, and stare at luminescent clocks, and sigh; men hear great tickings in the night, men hear a sucking, deathless maggot, men whisper speechlessly in silence: love shall last forever—and smile into a dusty face.”

And then, in a different voice, a voice of reflection, she whispered as she vanished down the funnel of his thought:

“There is sighing in the night here . . . there is sighing in the moving air . . . mute sighings, noiseless, flee down distant sleep-dead dreaming earthways. No canyon but has heard men sighing, and forests splashed with burning moonlight rustle with their loneliness; warm desert winds wing swiftly on the dying land, and dusty sighings tremble in their sterile grasp; and grass, marching billion-legged through all the years, has wondered at the endless, soundless sound of men in darkness sighing. . . .”

Now, in the silence, he once more whispered, “Mother!” But it had begun to rain, and only the cold, slow dripping of water on the window answered. Getting up, he lit a cigarette. Crossing to the window, he stood looking upward. Opening it, he leaned out; poised like an arrow, but bowless, he smoked and listened to the rushing of the rain.

APPENDIX

Down the Chain

CREATIVE DOCUMENTARY BY PAUL A. FINE

NAVIGATION in the Aleutian Islands used to be more art than science. Jerry, a navigator who had been in the islands since the bombing of Dutch Harbor, used to say it was educated guessing. In those days there was no radar, and radio beams did all sorts of freakish things, like bending off in the wrong direction, or splitting into two where there should have been one. For the newcomer, Aleutian Island navigation was just plain luck. My first flight up there from Anchorage, Alaska, to the Island of Umnak was a good case in point.

The squadron I had just joined had been hanging around the operations room at Elmendorf Field for a week, waiting for the break in the weather that would permit them to get through to Umnak, the base of operations for the bombing missions against Kiska. The previous day two crews had tried to get through, but not long after they had taken off, they were back. "It's bad right down to the water all the way down Cook Inlet," they had reported.

No one doubted them for a moment. Planes parked out on the ramp forty feet away appeared dim and shadowy through the fog. Naknek, a base just over the mountains we would have to cross, had been reporting no ceiling—no visibility all week, which meant that the pass through the mountains was probably socked in tight, too.

I was in no hurry to make the thousand-mile flight. I had learned to navigate in the Texas sunshine, or on bright starry Texas nights, and was entirely willing to wait another week or another year, if need be, for at least a reasonable facsimile of that type of weather. The old hands of the squadron were in no hurry, either. They were enjoying a much-needed rest at Anchorage and were not eager to get back to the dull but dangerous routine of bombing Kiska.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

The major in charge of dispatching planes, on the other hand, was a determined man. "They'll think we're just flubbing the dub around here," he would say. "God damn it, we've got to get someone through. We should have been down there and at work a week ago." He had sent three planes out that morning, one after the other at hourly intervals. And they had come back, regularly, with the same story as before. "You can't get through that stuff. It's right down on the water."

"Did you try to get over it?" the major asked.

Jerry, in the back of the room and therefore anonymous, said, "Famous last words, 'Let's go on top.' " Everyone laughed.

The major should have known better. The old-timers had learned to stay down where the navigators could see enough water to estimate the wind. It was the one way of getting fairly accurate navigation.

Anchorage lies to the south of the mountains and the island chain. Fog always seems to pack in against this side of the mountains down the entire length of the chain, making it necessary to cross through to the north side to find some kind of decent weather on the long flight westward. The point of crossover is near Naknek on the Alaskan Peninsula where a valley between the mountains occasionally permits passage beneath the fog that always covers the mountain tops.

At one o'clock that afternoon the ceiling at Anchorage lifted to two hundred feet. But the weather reports from Naknek were still discouraging. The major called my pilot over. "I think you ought to be able to get through, Edwards. We've got to get someone down there, to show that we are trying."

"Yes sir," Edwards said.

II

The rest of us in the crew had heard the verdict. There was a rustle in the room. Men who were writing letters folded them up and stuffed them into pockets, flying boots were zipped up, and

DOWN THE CHAIN

bulky, white leather parkas went on. I made a quick check to see if I had all my equipment.

"Everyone has to get lost up here at least once," Jerry said to me cheerfully. "Edwards is a pretty good navigator, for a mere pilot. If you get lost, don't be afraid to tell him."

Edwards was cool and quiet, a good man to inspire confidence, which I badly needed. As we walked out into the snow, I could hear Jerry, back in the operations room, giving four-to-one with no takers that Edwards wouldn't turn back.

I stood behind Edwards and the co-pilot on the flight deck and watched the propellers stream the snow out behind us as we took off. As soon as the wheels came up, I crawled through the passageway beside the retracted nosewheel beneath the flight deck. Then I climbed into the nose that had been loaded up with the duffle bags of the crew in order to balance the plane. I had to squeeze myself in. Edwards had headed the airplane toward Cook Inlet, flying just under the cloud layer at two hundred feet. I boosted myself up on to the navigator's table, put on my headset and throat microphone. Then I got out my equipment, checked the course, called Edwards on the interphone, and gave him my heading.

The huddled buildings of Anchorage had already disappeared in the grey-white mist behind us. As we flew on down the snowy, frozen Kenai Peninsula, we could see an occasional caribou, frightened by the roar of our engines, crashing through the snow between the spruce trees.

I noted the exact point and time on my map at which we crossed the Peninsula coast and headed out down the inlet. I made a mental note at the same time that the ceiling was coming down. We were still just beneath the cloud layer, and the altimeter was reading one hundred and fifty feet.

"What's the wind?" asked Edwards over the interphone. I looked at the water and made a guess.

"It's from a hundred and sixty degrees at about thirty knots, I think. How does it look to you?" Reading wind from the surface appearance of the sea takes practice.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

"I think you're about right," he said. "Just a little too mild. When the troughs between the waves get as deep as those are now, I think you'll find the wind closer to forty knots than thirty." I took his word for it.

The ceiling was getting lower all the time. Ahead of us we could see a curtain of snow and fog coming right down to the sea. "I'm going down on the water," Edwards said, "and we'll see if we can get through that stuff. Be sure to keep us out in the middle of the inlet. The coastline is all mountains."

From even as low as a hundred feet, waves are impersonal things. But down here where the props kicked spray off their crests, they were intimate, frightening fingers. Sheets of snow and sleet beat hard against the airplane. Some was sticking, and Edwards turned on the de-icers.

After a while we broke out of the area where the snow and fog hung down to the sea, and climbed back up to two hundred feet for a breather. From up here, the sea appeared obsidian black streaked with white, blown foam. The grey overcast seemed to be sliding over the top of the airplane. Ahead was another curtain of snow and sleet that reached down to the water. "If these bad patches aren't any thicker than that last one, I think we can get through," Edwards said as he eased the plane down again.

Anchorage was now an hour behind us. Edwards called me. "I can't get the Naknek beam. Do you know where we are?"

"I think so," I said.

"I hope we break out of this stuff before we get to the pass," he said.

I was bending down over my maps hard at work, but none too sure that my work was right, when I felt the airplane go into a violent bank and heard Edwards swearing over the interphone, saying something about sonofabitching fools who don't give a damn about getting killed. I looked up. A rocky, snow-covered mountain was towering out of the fog off our right wing tip. Edwards was talking to me. "I told you to keep away from the mountains. Now where the hell are we?"

DOWN THE CHAIN

I forced myself to look at that mountain again, and studied as much of the coastline as I could see. I looked at my map and found what seemed to be a comparable stretch of coast, then gave Edwards the new position.

"Now get us in the middle and keep us there till we get to the pass," he said. He turned the plane away, out over the sea again into the endless fog.

III

The point where we were to turn out of the inlet to cross through the pass was about forty-five minutes further down the inlet, according to my figures. The wind was constantly changing, and we still could not pick up the Naknek beam. Working in the nose of the plane, I felt as though I were completely alone, surrounded by snow and fog, with the lurching sea at my feet. Somewhere in back of me Edwards and the co-pilot were busy at the controls, the radio operator was dozing at his table, and the rest of the crew were sound asleep on their parachutes which, at this altitude, were useless for anything but pillows.

It was four o'clock and snowing heavily when we reached the point at which I figured we should turn. Edwards put the plane into a bank, took up my new heading without hesitation, and began to climb. Thousands of tiny pellets of mushy snow were striking the airplane. Ice formed on the nose, and on the wings, and as fast as the de-icers would break it off, it would form again.

Edwards leveled off at 4000 feet. "We haven't much altitude, but I don't think we'd better go any higher the way we're icing up," he said.

Somewhere ahead of us were the mountains, and somewhere in the mountains was the pass through which we had to fly. I didn't say anything. I had a feeling it was all out of my hands anyway.

The roar of the engines became vacuous silence. I moved one of the barracks bags in front of me out of the way, pushed a machine gun to one side, and tried to peer through the snow.

AMERICAN VANGUARD

Then I heard Edwards shouting through the interphone. It startled me. "What the hell are you doing down there, sleeping?"

"No. Why?"

"I called you twice and you didn't answer. Congratulations, m'boy."

"What are you talking about?"

"Look out to the sides."

I looked. Shadowy mountains rushed up into the snowstorm on either side of us. We were in the middle of the pass.

"Nice going," said the co-pilot. "Thanks."

I felt pretty good, and kept to myself the thought that I had had very little to do with it.

As we crossed through the pass, we burst out into brilliant sunshine. The sky was intensely blue, and the snow below so white it hurt my eyes. The crags and peaks of Unimak Island looked like a giant's castle carved of marble with battlements, pinnacles, penants, and all rising out of the sea six thousand feet into the sunlight. Unimak Volcano, nine thousand feet high, signaled with a great puff of black smoke as we passed.

Pack ice lay on the calm sea ahead of us, and the black spots covering the ice turned out to be seals that splashed into the sea as we went over. Along the beach further down we flew over the hut of a native family who had somehow escaped evacuation and who waved, Pappa, Mamma, and all their parka-clad children, as we passed. The red roofs of the cannery at Egegek shone in the sunlight ahead of us.

Edwards was loudly singing a dirty song over the interphone. "As I was walking down the street, singing songs of blood and thunder, fiddely-i-ee, fiddely-i-oh. . . ." Then he stopped. "Think we will get to Umnak now?" he asked me.

I looked at the blue-green sea far below us, the snow-covered islands to our left. "I think so," I said, and I really did think so, this time.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Biographical Notes

HAROLD APPLEBAUM was born January 29, 1916, in New York City. His boyhood was spent in Brooklyn, where he attended P.S. 99 and Erasmus Hall High School. After graduating from high school, he attended Brooklyn College and New York University. During the war he served with the 4th Division Artillery. Like many other young men, Mr. Applebaum became seriously interested in creative writing while under the impact of Army experience and travel.

Mr. Applebaum has had stories published in *Liberty* and *Today's Woman*. Over seven hundred of his poems have appeared in anthologies, magazines, and newspapers. A book of his poems entitled *Solo* was published by Creative Age Press in 1947. "The primary aim of the creative artist," writes Mr. Applebaum, "should be communication of an idea, message, or impression to his reader with a minimum of lost effect." Mr. Applebaum is now at work on a novel under the guidance of Dr. Hiram Haydn in the New School Novel Workshop.

VLADIMIR BABIKOFF was born December 26, 1907, in Kiev, Russia, where his father was an engineer draftsman, his mother a professional nurse. When he was fourteen, Mr. Babikoff came with his family to the United States. He attended elementary and high schools in New York City, where he also studied at the Art Academy from 1929 to 1935, meanwhile working at unskilled or semiskilled manual labor. In the Army, where he served as a sergeant with the 64th General Hospital in Africa and Italy from 1942 to 1946, he was "violently shocked by the wholesale intellectual and moral irresponsibility of the average American." Since his discharge from the Army in 1946, Mr. Babikoff has attended the New School, where he has taken courses both in writing and art. His paintings were exhibited in Wildenstein Galleries in 1947.

The authors most influential in Mr. Babikoff's thought have been Spinoza, Hume, Vaihinger, Tolstoi, Whitman, Freud, Chekhov, Kafka, Joyce. "In a sense," writes Mr. Babikoff, "I commit myself to being responsible for all the present slavehoods and misery of man, as well as for all of man's coming freedoms." The duty of the creative artist is "to keep that which is still human within him from being destroyed. . . . Brain children are much tougher than flesh-and-blood creations. . . . For the sake of my humanness, as embodied in these brain-children of mine, I believe in enlisting the aid of all those dead who have left the impress of their spirits upon all Time. I welcome all their thronging, eager brain-children to the hearth of my soul." Another purpose of the creative artist is "to challenge the tribal mores and dissect their stultifying effects on the individual."

Though Mr. Babikoff has written many sketches and a great deal of poetry, "Laughing Santa" is his first published work.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

WILLIAM CARL BONDARENKO was born in Philadelphia, December 13, 1921. Mr. Bondarenko's later boyhood was spent in Long Island City, where he graduated from P.S. 122 and Long Island City High School. Enlisting in the Army Air Forces, he served as a B-29 engineer for three and a half years. Before overseas service, while in training, he attended the University of Southern California, Kansas State Teachers College, and the University of Wisconsin. Since returning from the service, he has attended New York University and the New School.

Mark Twain, John Dewey, and Plato are the writers who have had greatest impact on Mr. Bondarenko's ideas. Mr. Bondarenko likes the realistic imagery of Dostoevsky and the lucidity of Maugham. "To me," writes Mr. Bondarenko, "the artist is one who creates without the need for recognition. There are, of course, degrees of vanity and pride, but my trust is with the creators whose humility knows no bottom."

Though Mr. Bondarenko has written many stories and a great deal of poetry of substantial merit, "The Girl's Banana" is his first published work.

REBECCA SARAH BOORSTEIN was born July 26, 1920, in Atlanta, Georgia, the daughter of a businessman. After attending elementary school in Atlanta and Hogansville, Georgia, Miss Boorstein graduated from Girls' High School, Atlanta, and then from the University of Georgia, receiving her A.B. in 1940. In 1943 she enlisted in the Women's Army Corps and served for three years with the rank of sergeant. Before and since her Army service, Miss Boorstein has worked as a stenographer, proofreader, correspondent, and editor.

Among the authors she counts most influential in her thinking are Thorstein Veblen, Gertrude Stein, Katherine Mansfield, and Sherwood Anderson. "Every other purposeful activity [than creative writing]," writes Miss Boorstein, "seems to me to be concerned with mere preparation for living. Only the creative arts give me the satisfaction of feeling that I am dealing directly with life itself." "Bathroom Dilemma" and "Week-End" are Miss Boorstein's first published stories.

JACK BOXER, born in Smith Falls, Ontario, July 10, 1909, accompanied his family first to Syracuse, and then at the age of five to New York's East Side. When Mr. Boxer was fourteen, the family moved to Astoria, Long Island, where they have lived ever since. In Manhattan Mr. Boxer attended P.S. 79 and P.S. 20; in Queens he attended Bryant High School at night, but did not graduate. The only college he has attended is the New School.

A member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in 1937-38, Mr. Boxer was wounded twice while fighting for the Spanish Loyalists. In World War II Mr. Boxer served as an MP Escort Guard, first spending a year in the United States supervising the German prisoners of Rommel's Afrika Korps, later serving for a year and a half in France after D-day.

Of the writers who have shaped his sense of style and literary value, Mr. Boxer places Dos Passos and Hemingway first, then Steinbeck and Sherwood Anderson. Ever since he left public school, Mr. Boxer has made sporadic sallies in the art of writing. He is the author of several short musical plays produced by a club of which he is a member. Not until he attended the New School, however, after World War II, did Mr. Boxer begin to write with a serious creative purpose. He is now at work on a novel of postwar America. "The Man of the Family" is his first published story.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

MRS. KAY BRODNEY was born August 21, 1920, in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, the daughter of a businessman. She attended a Catholic elementary school and high schools in Fond du Lac and Ripon, Wisconsin. In 1938-39 she attended La Crosse State Teachers College, in 1939-40 and subsequent summers the University of Wisconsin. Mrs. Brodney has had experience in the writing, acting, and coaching of plays. One of her one-act plays was produced at the University of Wisconsin. At various times she has joined theater groups, among them the Springfield Community Players and the Westfield Players of Los Angeles. Married to Mr. Kenneth Brodney, a newspaper reporter, Mrs. Brodney is employed at present in the publishing company of Thomas Y. Crowell, and lives in New York. "The Last Flight" is her first published story.

JOHN BURRESS was born December 31, 1911, in Halls, Tennessee. His boyhood was spent in the small town of Senath, Missouri. Later the family moved to Versailles, Pennsylvania, where Mr. Burress lived while he attended Braddock High School. In his early twenties Mr. Burress began serious creative work, completing two novels which remain unpublished. After two years in the Coast Guard and his marriage to Janet Young in 1941, Mr. Burress settled in New York City, where he has attended the New School and devoted himself to the writing of his novel, *Little Mule*, the first chapter of which appears in the present volume. One purpose of Mr. Burress' creative endeavor is to "improve relations between the races of man in American life." The novel, *Little Mule*, deals with a southern boyhood and the gradual awareness of the social and psychological conflicts of southern culture.

ANGELICA CARO was born in Berlin May 20, 1927, the daughter of a judge. For several years before the age of ten Miss Caro attended a private progressive school in Germany. In 1937 the family removed to Brussels, Belgium, where Miss Caro attended Lycée de St. Gilles. The German occupation forced her family into hiding in Belgium, during which time she was unable to continue formal schooling. Separated from the world of school and schoolmates, she began to write her first novel. Miss Caro did not begin to write in English, however, until October, 1947, when she took up courses at the New School. Her mother is a dancer; her father now teaches German and mathematics at Connecticut College.

"A work of art," writes Miss Caro, "may find its impulse in love, hatred, or despair. It has no rule, except the will to be created. Therefore it chooses its artist as the bee chooses its flower, the artist not being the master, but simply its instrument."

COSTA CAROUSSO was born July 23, 1916, in Athens, Greece. His boyhood, however, was spent in Flushing, New York, and Bayside, where he attended P.S. 130 and Flushing High School. In 1939 Mr. Carouso graduated from New College, Columbia University. During the war he served with the 8th Air Force for four years in England and France. Since his return from the service, Mr. Carouso has served as editor and writer for various pulp magazines.

In his study of style Mr. Carouso has learned most from Conrad Aiken. The creative writer, asserts Mr. Carouso, "should look to find the dignity of human

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

beings, their essential godliness, their tragi-comic efforts to find peace and love and brotherhood. He should bend his ears, too, to the savage snarling of the jungle-beast, the stifled scream of madness, and waiting shadow of death. He should shun cleverness like the pest, and at the first symptoms of cynicism he should sell his typewriter for strong drink."

ROBERT CARTER was born September 16, 1923, in Omaha, Nebraska. He spent his early boyhood in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he graduated from elementary school. His high-school years were spent in Wisconsin. Later Mr. Carter attended Lawrence College and the University of Chicago before entering the Army, in which he served for fifteen months overseas with the Communications Squadron of the 14th Air Force.

The writers who have had the most influence on Mr. Carter's thought are Sherwood Anderson, Aldous Huxley, Samuel Butler, André Gide, and Thomas Mann. Among those whose style he admires are Fitzgerald, Anderson, Conrad, Proust, and Cervantes. "The ultimate aim of the writer," writes Mr. Carter, "should be to reach, if possible to exceed, the fullest realization of his gifts. . . . I do not conceive of the writer as a preacher, but as a critic; not as a leader, but as an interpreter."

LILI DANCHIK is the daughter of the actor and violinist, Gene Kerekes. She was born December 10, 1918, in a Hungarian neighborhood of Detroit, where she completed her elementary and high-school work. After a brief experience as an actress in Hollywood, Miss Kerekes was married to Mr. Bernard Danchik, a young businessman. Mrs. Danchik resides in Washington, D.C., where she has attended American University for two years. She is the mother of a baby boy.

The writers who have had the most influence on Mrs. Danchik's ideas have been Upton Sinclair, John Dos Passos, and Aldous Huxley. In a stylistic sense she has learned most from Aldous Huxley, Ernest Hemingway, and Somerset Maugham. To Mrs. Danchik writing "means going behind facades of human beings, understanding and describing the motivations of hungers and impulses, explaining people to themselves."

Though Mrs. Danchik has written many stories and sketches, "Margie Stone" is her first published work. She is now at work on a novel.

THOMAS ANTHONY DARDIS was born August 19, 1923, in Brooklyn, New York. In a boyhood spent on Long Island and in Manhattan, he attended parochial schools and P.S. 52 and P.S. 152 in Manhattan, later graduating from George Washington High School. In 1943-44 he attended William and Mary College. In the Army Mr. Dardis served as a sergeant in the Transportation Corps and later in the 29th Division.

Mr. Dardis' favorite authors are Dostoevsky, T. S. Eliot, Faulkner, Gide, and Tolstoi. For young writers he believes the most important authors are Faulkner, Hemingway, and Chekhov. "The writer," asserts Mr. Dardis, "must be concerned solely with his own perceptions. Everything else is a lie and a swindle. The problem for the writer is this: How can I state my truth and make you, the reader, accept it as your truth?"

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

SIGRID DE LIMA was born in New York City in 1921. In 1929 her family moved to Palo Alto, California, where she attended a progressive elementary school and Palo Alto High School. Ten years later she returned to New York City, taking her last year of high school at the Lincoln School of Teachers College. In 1942 she received the A.B. degree at Barnard College and in 1944 the M.S. degree at the Columbia School of Journalism.

After two years with the United Press, Miss de Lima did feature writing for various newspapers, particularly the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. She has contributed to *Tomorrow*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, *Direction*, and the *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*.

CHARLES MICHAEL DUNN was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1921. In his boyhood his family traveled a great deal; he has lived in South Carolina, Florida, and Tennessee. In 1942 he entered the Army and served with the 7th and 10th Mountain Divisions, seeing action in the Aleutian Islands and later in Italy. Since the war he has attended the New School and made a living as a writer for pulp magazines.

Mr. Dunn owes most to Sophocles for the "overwhelming sense of nightmare reality I have found in his work." Other influential writers have been Proust, Conrad, and Keats. "The purpose of creative writing," asserts Mr. Dunn, "should be to illuminate the symbolical experience of man, to catalogue the infinite varied effects of physical and spiritual phenomena on the lives of men. Like the poet and painter, the creative writer should give a tongue and an eloquence to the commonplace."

PAUL FINE was born September 26, 1920, in Pueblo, Colorado. When he was five, the family moved to La Junta, Colorado, and later to Trinidad, Colorado, where he lived until he had completed two years of college. In this community Mr. Fine attended elementary school and was graduated from Trinidad High School. While enrolled at the Engineering School of Trinidad State Junior College, Mr. Fine worked thirteen hours a night seven nights a week for twelve dollars a week. In 1941, having already qualified as a private airplane pilot, Mr. Fine entered the Aviation Cadets, later served as navigator in the Aleutian Islands, and was wounded July 2, 1943 by flak over Kiska. After being discharged from the hospital on Christmas Day, 1943, Mr. Fine served as test-flight navigator in Utah, California, and Washington. Released from the service in July, 1946, Mr. Fine enrolled at the New School for full-time work in psychology and sociology. He expects to receive his degree in 1949 and intends to work for his M.A. in the same field. Mr. Fine has been married for five and a half years and has one child, Marc, aged three.

Mr. Fine has written often for newspapers, for Army publications, and is at present editing the PCA Newsletter in Camp Shanks. From time to time his correspondence has appeared in the *New Republic*. "Peace" and "Down the Chain" are among his first attempts at creative writing. "I believe it is the function of the artist and the social scientist," writes Mr. Fine, "to find a sane way to restore decency to our intellectual and moral life."

HILLEL FRIMET, whose real name is Richard Newman, was born in Poland. His father's first name is Boruch and his mother's Hinda-Frimet, the last of which he has

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

taken for his writing name. In 1927 his parents migrated to the town of Sudbury, in the Province of Ontario, Canada, where during long winters the town was surrounded by plains of snow for hundreds of miles and where life was simple and often sad.

During the war, while he served first with the 781st Hospital Ship Platoon and afterward with the 219th Hospital Ship Complement on land and at sea, his grandfather and fifty-three other relatives in Poland were murdered by the Germans, leaving only a few in Ireland and South Africa. He was discharged in November, 1944, with a disability and a commendation for his service.

He began to write in the early part of 1945, attempting a nonfictional account of his experiences, but it failed to satisfy him, and he wandered around the country in search of his shipmates and his friends among the wounded.

In the fall of the same year he entered the New School to study literature and philosophy, conceived his novel, *Dog Down the Deadlights*, and began work on it in 1946. A scene from the novel was published in the winter issue of *Twelfth Street*, a quarterly.

Nietzsche, Bergson, and Dostoevsky have helped him to work out his own philosophy and to root his own convictions in the artist's intuition. Although Nietzsche and Bergson have been thought of mostly as philosophers, he considers them to be, because of their intuitive sense as opposed to proscribed forms in writing, creative artists of the highest kind.

Dostoevsky, Melville, and Céline are three great figures in literature he thinks young writers should study. All three have naturalness and simplicity of style, the understanding that the truth lies at the bottom, and, like deep-sea divers, know the risks. Céline, for him, is first of all a poet, but also the physician who washes his hands before and after—he has had a look. . . .

PHYLLIS GAINFORT was born April 11, 1924, in San Francisco, California. She attended Alofa School in San Francisco, Principia High School in St. Louis, Missouri, and the Principia College, in Elsah, Illinois.

The writers who have most influenced Miss Gainfort's thought have been Bernard Shaw, Rebecca West, E. M. Forster, and Rainer Maria Rilke. Stylistically she has learned most from Woolf, Forster, and Lawrence.

Miss Gainfort enrolled in the New School in 1947. "It was not a rational decision to take the course," she writes. "It was a need. There was a certain excess of life that needed form and a new dimension." To Miss Gainfort the function of the artist seems curiously akin to the process of creation in Genesis. "There are the deeds of light and order. And the artist exists to throw light, bright or murky, to focus his consciousness on one segment of life and penetrate it. He also creates a firmament on which we have some basis for considering ourselves. For life spills over us in chaotic overflow each day, and the artist feels the need of arresting it, of damming it up in pools or river beds, of giving it pattern, and thence, meaning. With the splintering of modern life in its disturbing atomic fragments, the artist becomes more necessary to society than ever before, for he can create at least an artificial order and new synthesis." Miss Gainfort's story, "Privilege," is her first published work.

ALAN WILLIAM GOLDMAN was born December 22, 1922, in New York City, the son of a businessman. After an early boyhood on Long Island, Mr. Goldman attended

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

P.S. 39 in Queens, and was graduated from Far Rockaway High School. Following two years at the University of Michigan, Mr. Goldman enlisted as an aviation cadet in 1942 and served three years as navigator on a B-17 attached to the 8th Air Force. Mr. Goldman's plane was shot down over Belgium September 30, 1944. Upon his return to civilian life, Mr. Goldman resumed his work as an advertising copywriter, meanwhile attending evening classes at Columbia University and the New School. Though Mr. Goldman has written a number of articles for newspapers and magazines, "It Wouldn't Be Purple" is his first published creative work.

In a stylistic sense Mr. Goldman has learned most from O'Hara, Lardner, and Perelman. His favorite poets are Chaucer and Coleridge. "I think an artist should not be an open crusader," writes Mr. Goldman. "He believes in something, of course, but in achieving that belief he often cracks his whip too loudly and too often. I find the derisive word a far superior cutting tool to the excoriating blast."

MADELYN HARRIS was born January 20, 1927, in New York City. Her early years were spent in Flatbush, where she attended P.S. 199 and P.S. 99, later graduating from James Madison High School. She is majoring in English at Brooklyn College. "The function of the artist," she writes, "should be to know the problems, fears, doubts, sadness, weakness, nobility of human beings. He should try to attain an unwavering sympathy for people with neither censure nor judgment coloring his conclusions."

MATTHEW HELD was born February 12, 1928, in Brooklyn, where he attended P.S. 197, P.S. 87, and Columbia Grammar School. Later he attended the University of Illinois and the New School.

The writer most influential on Mr. Held's thought is D. H. Lawrence; on his style, James, Hemingway, and Kafka. "I believe in truths," writes Mr. Held, "known and unknown, the truth of people's feelings, pretty or unpretty, the faithful description of my own emotions, the faithful seed of ugliness."

"Four Fridays" is Mr. Held's first published story.

KENNETH HENRY was born May 13, 1920, near Boston, Massachusetts, where he attended elementary school and completed his high-school training. In preparatory school as well as in college Mr. Henry won distinction in writing. Mr. Henry is now living in New York City, where he holds a full-time job, and is at work on a first novel in his spare time. -

The primary authors in Mr. Henry's reading have been E. M. Forster and André Gide. "Before the time I can remember," writes Mr. Henry, "I wrote a poem about a robin. As in that first poem, writing has been my response to life. Life gathers, rises, and breaks out. Writing is part of this breaking out, the reacting process of a certain kind of heart and mind, of a certain individual chemistry, milieu, and sequence of events." On the subject of style Mr. Henry comments: "When I was fifteen, I tried imitating Dickens, at twenty, Joyce. Then I began to realize, as every serious writer at some point must, that style is not an end to seek, but rather a by-product of honestly being oneself. This sounds easier than it is. But when a writer faces himself squarely, he knows that he can only write of life in his own terms. Céline sees life

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

violently and bitterly; his style is acidic, slangy, and violent. James sees life complexly and deliberately; his style is heavy, circumspect, and analytical."

LEON HOROWITZ was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1918. Here he attended the Washington School, Forest Park Junior High School, and Classical High School. From 1935 to 1940 he attended Northeastern University. The years 1941 to 1945 Mr. Horowitz spent in the Army, thirty-seven months in the Mediterranean Theater. After his discharge from the Army, Mr. Horowitz attended American University "to express a long hidden desire to learn to write under good tutelage." Later he worked as a reporter on the *Springfield Republican*. The ultimate ambition of the writer, in Mr. Horowitz' opinion, should be the attainment of "knowledge of people and their modes of life, so that he can assemble this knowledge on paper, brushing and blending his words together with the same skill that a painter uses in working his canvas." The writers who have had most influence on Mr. Horowitz' thought are Somerset Maugham, James Thurber, Sherwood Anderson, and Mark Twain.

HERBERT KALISMAN was born November 3, 1920, in New York City, where he attended P.S. 75 in the Bronx and later James Monroe and James Madison High Schools. He attended Brooklyn College, entering with the class of '42. Enlisting in the Air Force in June of that year, Mr. Kalisman served seventeen months with the 311th Fighter Squadron in the 5th Air Force, Pacific Theater. Now engaged in advertising and promotion work, Mr. Kalisman has written a number of short stories. "The Fall of a Southern Ego," however, is his first published work of serious creative endeavor.

PHILIP KARANT was born June 15, 1912, in New York City, the son of a laundry worker. His childhood he spent in an East Harlem neighborhood, attending P.S. 103 and New York Evening High School. In 1933 he was graduated from City College. Later, from 1936 to 1938, he attended the New York School for Social Work and still later the New School. Mr. Karant has worked as printer's apprentice, cook, social worker, prison guard, state policeman, fencing instructor, and radio operator. During the war Mr. Karant served as a lieutenant junior grade with the United States Naval Reserve. As a communications officer he sailed on ships to England, France, Italy, Russia, and India. At present he is serving as a sea-going radio operator. Mr. Karant is married and has a daughter, Sue, five months old.

Though long interested in writing, and possessing a wide acquaintance with world literature, Mr. Karant did not begin a serious creative career until he went to sea, where he was permitted long hours of daily isolation. He has written a novel, still unpublished, titled *Old Woe's New Wail*, together with a number of short stories and sketches. "Happy Sunday" is Mr. Karant's first published story.

MARSHALL LEVIN was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, November 1, 1926. After attending elementary and high schools in Brookline, Massachusetts, Mr. Levin attended the University of Massachusetts from 1944 to 1945. After his induction in

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

1945, he served in the Army Air Forces Technical Training Command for twenty-six months. On his return from service, Mr. Levin enrolled at the New School, attended Northwestern University in the fall of 1947, and is now a student at the University of Chicago.

The contemporary writer by whom Mr. Levin has been most influenced is Thomas Wolfe: "The tremendous passion which forced him to live and write made a living language for me out of what schoolrooms had killed—serious writing." An artist, writes Mr. Levin, "lives in a world made of himself, but in himself is every other being that ever lived or died. This is a terrible burden to carry alone." The flexibility of Dos Passos' style made a sharp impact on Mr. Levin. "When I read *U.S.A.*," he writes, "I had a sense of liberation." "I Couldn't Cry" is Mr. Levin's first published work.

JOHN J. MALONEY was born March 30, 1916, in East Orange, New Jersey. Later his family moved to Buffalo, where he attended P.S. 63, Bennett High School, and Canisius College. After serving for forty-one months in the Army, Mr. Maloney decided to enroll in the New School and give full rein to his long-cherished ambition to write. He is now at work on a novel, the first chapter of which is "Subway to Brooklyn" of the present volume.

Among the authors who have influenced Mr. Maloney, Dostoevsky, Joyce, Mann, Tolstoi, and Dreiser are the most important. Stylistically he believes Joyce, Wolfe, Lowry, Melville, and Woolf are most suggestive for the young writer. "The stricken world of today," writes Mr. Maloney, "is one in which it is difficult for artists of certain backgrounds and sensibilities to function at all; but artists of a sturdier stamp may be stimulated to do greater work than they might under more ideal conditions. It is said that the artist cannot possibly do his work well while the world totters on the brink of destruction. I do not believe this. This may not be the time for the creating of simple, eloquent lyrics or romantic idylls; it is the time for the writing of great tragedy. The artist can and must function today even within the shadow of the atom bomb. As always, he must take the raw materials of his world, temper them in the flame of his passion, and through his talent fuse them into a microcosm of life truer than life itself, carrying words or colors or notes to things that people have always known, but now through the artist's insight experience more deeply than ever before. . . . The artist cannot solve problems. By his nature he is not equipped to solve them. The artist has another purpose: to him is given the faculty of interpreting his fellow men in their frailty, misery, and grandeur to others. He is concerned primarily with human beings and their dilemmas."

THOMAS KIERAN MARTIN was born January 21, 1918, in Jamaica, Long Island. He attended P.S. 76 in Brownsville, Brooklyn, and was graduated from Erasmus Hall High School. At twenty, while working as a clerk in a furniture warehouse in Manhattan, Mr. Martin began reading and writing poetry for the first time. In the Army Mr. Martin served as a sergeant in North Africa and Italy in liaison work with the Free French and later as script writer in the British Forces Station at Bari. After his discharge in October, 1945, Mr. Martin attended the New School and devoted his full energy to creative writing. He has written two novels, both unpublished, and is now at work on a third. Married for six years, Mr. Martin has two children, Allegra, aged

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

five, and Michael, three and a half. Mr. Martin has been published in *Ages and Races* (Princeton University Press, 1941) and in *Twelfth Street*, a quarterly.

The writers most influential in Mr. Martin's life have been Shakespeare, Blake, Keats, Dostoevsky, Balzac, and D. H. Lawrence. "Art is a way of seeing," writes Mr. Martin. "The man most valuable to read is the man who sees the deepest. That man to my mind is Shakespeare."

An artistic creation "keeps the spirit alive, gives the heart a center and direction." On the function of poets Mr. Martin says "the poets are the true moral legislators of the world because they affect the deepest part of man's nature. This part is his imagination, the womb of his sympathy. We say children are imaginative and there is no being more sympathetic than a child. His imagination, like the poet's, extends even to the inanimate world, the world of trees, the earth, the sea."

HARRY NIX was born March 30, 1923, in Lumber City, Georgia. After attending elementary school and high school in McRae and Atlanta, he took special non-academic courses for two years at the University of Georgia. Mr. Nix then entered the Army, where he served with the 35th Signal Detachment and Coast Artillery in the Pacific, in New Guinea, the Philippines, and China. Since leaving the Army, he has lived in Greenwich Village and attended the New School, bending his efforts seriously toward the short-story form.

In a stylistic sense Mr. Nix has learned most from D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, and Thomas Wolfe. Since early childhood Mr. Nix has been ambitious to write. When he was twelve years old, he wrote three composition books full of a novel in longhand, because he had never read the kind of a story he had wanted to read. "Through an accident of some high-school writing assignments," says Mr. Nix, "I later decided I had the greatest talent in the world, a theory I have failed to prove even to myself." Another novel Mr. Nix began at eighteen, discarding it after four chapters.

Mr. Nix believes that the impress of individuality is the most fruitful outcome of creative endeavor. "I believe that every artist, regardless of his medium, will ultimately express nuances of all his experience in his work; his philosophy, though it be ever changing in an unconscious, evolutionary fashion, inevitably reveals itself in his art."

"Spring Holiday" and "In the Early Hours" are Mr. Nix's first published stories.

MRS. THERESA OAKES was born August 7, 1902, in Philadelphia. Though her girlhood was spent in the Midwest, Mrs. Oakes's family returned to the East, where Mrs. Oakes attended Evander Childs High School, New York City, and graduated from Hunter College in 1923. She is the mother of two children, a boy and a girl in their teens.

"I am not an intellectual," writes Mrs. Oakes. "I read very little. Indeed I think I do better creative work when I concentrate not on books, but on the life around me. I write to show the attachments and detachments that exist between people I know or can imagine."

In 1943 Mrs. Oakes won a \$10,000-prize for writing the film script of *The Lady from Cheyenne*.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

NENA O'NEILL was born November 29, 1923, in St. Lawrence, Pennsylvania. Her childhood was spent in Akron, Ohio, where she attended St. Martha's Parochial School and North High School. In 1942-43 she enrolled in Akron University, in 1944-46 in Barnard College, where she majored in anthropology. Meanwhile she had experimented in music, painting, dancing, and designing. She has one child, a son, aged sixteen months.

Among Mrs. O'Neill's favorite authors are Shakespere, T. S. Eliot, Pirandello, Steinbeck, Shaw, Woolf, Auden, Gide, Proust, Mann, Malinowski. Stylistically Mrs. O'Neill believes Conrad, Galsworthy, and James most important for young writers to study.

RUTH POPOFSKY was born January 16, 1921, in the Bronx, where she graduated from P.S. 2 and later from Morris High School. Miss Popofsky attended evening sessions at City College from 1941 to 1944 and the University of Wisconsin in the summer of 1945. While attending City College, she became editor of the intercollegiate magazine, *Pulse*, to which she contributed articles and poetry.

Among the books influential in Miss Popofsky's creative development were *Mill on the Floss*, *Middlemarch*, *The Way of All Flesh*, and *Lord Jim*. Miss Popofsky believes that no one can trace personal conflicts to their sources without thinking realistically about social forces. Moreover the writer should be conscious of his power to represent constructive social values: "It is ethically criminal for a writer to repudiate social purpose."

HELEN POWERS (QUAIN) was born on June 13, 1914 in Hoquiam, Washington, the daughter of a lumberman. After attending elementary school in South Bend, Washington, and high school in Tacoma and Seattle, Miss Quain attended the University of Washington and the College of Puget Sound at Tacoma. In 1943 Miss Quain was inducted into the Army Air Forces, where she served until 1945.

Miss Quain's occupational experience includes work as a typist, as a hospital orderly, as a factory worker, as the assistant manager of a bookstore. Among her favorite authors are Hemingway, Faulkner, Céline, and Steinbeck. Not until leaving the Army did Miss Quain realize how deep were her need and desire for creative writing. "The Biggest Horses in the World" is her first published work.

JACK SEGAL, the son of a lumber merchant, was born in 1918 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he completed his elementary and high-school work. Later he attended the University of Wisconsin, where he was graduated in 1941. After his college days Mr. Segal became a professional song writer with a record of twelve published songs. He is a member of the ASCAP. Among modern musicians he is most interested in Bartok, Ives, Stravinsky, Schönberg, and Walton.

The writers who have had most influence on Mr. Segal's thought are Hemingway, Kafka, and Lawrence. Mr. Segal affirms "the end of nihilism" and believes that "the cycle of life affirmation is beginning to proceed among the younger creative spirits."

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

FRANK SPIRO was born in Brooklyn February 15, 1925. From the time he attended elementary school at P.S. 41 in Greenwich Village, where he won first prize in an essay contest on the subject, "What I Would Do If I Were President," Mr. Spiro has been seriously interested in writing. After graduating from Erasmus Hall High School, Mr. Spiro enrolled at Brooklyn College. In January, 1943, he enlisted in the Navy, where one of his most vivid experiences was spending twelve days in the brig for breaking a Coca-Cola machine. When charges against him were dropped, he was sent to Sonar school, where he learned the techniques of submarine warfare and became a petty officer. He was assigned to the *U.S.S. Goss* with Destroyer Escort 444. He served in Bermuda waters, the Caribbean Sea, the Canal, and the Pacific. In the Pacific he saw action on Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and Luzon. In January, 1945, he was reassigned to the States to take a new course in Sonar. Discharged in April, 1946, he returned to Brooklyn College, where he is concentrating on literature and creative writing, meanwhile attending classes also at the New School. He expects to receive his degree at Brooklyn College in June of this year.

"Kalman Thought of Tomorrow" will appear in the new *Story* quarterly. It is used in this volume by the kind permission of Mr. Whit Burnett.

WILLIAM STYRON, Jr., was born June 11, 1925, in Newport News, Virginia. He attended elementary school at Hilton Village, Virginia, and completed his high-school training at Christ Church School, Virginia. From 1942-43 he attended Davidson College, from 1943-44 Duke University. Enlisting in the Marine Corps in 1943, Mr. Styron served for two and a half years.

The writers who have had most influence on Mr. Styron's thought are Montaigne, Rabelais, Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway. In a stylistic sense he has learned most from Faulkner, Conrad, and Joyce. Mr. Styron has had work published previously in an anthology of Duke University stories and verse entitled *One and Twenty*.

JOHN WEINER was born on a farm near Livingston Manor, New York, on June 6, 1919. Here he went to elementary school and graduated from high school, with only thirteen in his graduating class. In his rural community, which in summer was a thriving resort, Mr. Weiner came to know personalities of the theater world who stimulated in him an interest in literature and art. His favorite boyhood authors were Marryat, Dickens, Fielding, Verne, and Harris.

After attending the Pennsylvania Military College for one year, Mr. Weiner transferred to Cornell University and graduated with a B.A. degree in 1941. At Cornell he was encouraged in his writing by Professor E. C. Wilson. In May, 1941, Mr. Weiner entered the Army as private, became attached to the 97th Signal Battalion, served in Europe with the 9th and 3rd Armies, ending his military career as a captain.

Mr. Weiner has been most influenced by contemporary American writers, Hemingway, Steinbeck, O'Hara, Hersey, Irwin Shaw, E. J. Kahn, Jr. "Thumbs Up" is Mr. Weiner's first published story. He is now at work on a novel the background of which is the resort area of Sullivan County, N.Y.

MILTON WEINSTEIN was born on April 30, 1913, in Revere, Massachusetts. Later the family moved to Niagara Falls, to Buffalo, and finally to Newark, where Mr. Wein-

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

stein graduated from South Side High School. From 1929 to 1933 Mr. Weinstein attended New York University, where he was graduated with the B.S. degree. For three and a half years he saw service with the 4th Airways Communication Group, Army Air Forces, CBI Theater. "My work in the late thirties as a case worker," writes Mr. Weinstein, "brought me into contact with life as it was lived by the 'lower stratas.' But the big shock came when I realized that the lower strata, far from being a small, exceptional group in our society, was in fact the bulk of it. The war itself, looked on by many as the agency to end this era of decadence, could not: it was itself the creature of this decadence. At the end of the war I felt we had to start from scratch and build a new way of life. To the question, 'Am I my brother's keeper?', I want the answer to be 'Yes,' but today and for many years to come I am intent only on learning the craft of writing well."

"A Rose for *Maman*" is Mr. Weinstein's first published story.